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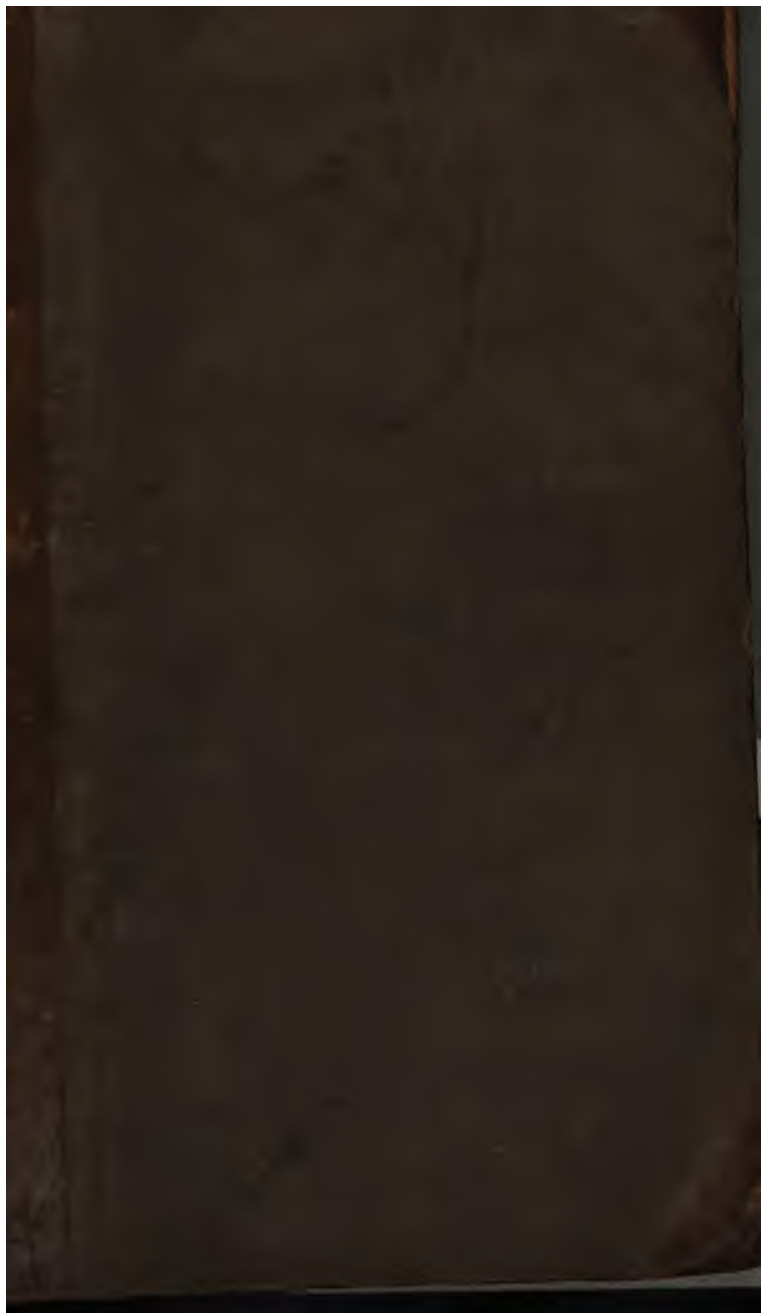
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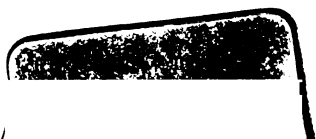
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**THE**  
**BRAVO OF BOHEMIA.**

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**A ROMANCE.**

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Printed by J. Darling, Leadenhall-Street, London.

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THE  
**BRAVO OF BOHEMIA;**

OR,  
**THE BLACK FOREST.**

**A Romance.**

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**IN FOUR VOLUMES.**

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BY THE AUTHOR OF  
**JESSY, OR THE ROSE OF DONALD'S COTTAGE; YAMBOO, OR  
THE NORTH AMERICAN SLAVE, &c. &c.**

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• • • • •  
For only such a wretch can wander here,  
Who e'en the winds and show'rs of rain defies—  
Out-daring all the anger of the skies.  
Observe his face; see, his disorder'd hair  
Is ruffled by the tempest-beaten air;  
Yet look what tracks of grief have ag'd his face,  
Where hardly twenty years have run their race.

COWLEY.

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**SECOND EDITION.**

**VOL. I.**

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**London:**

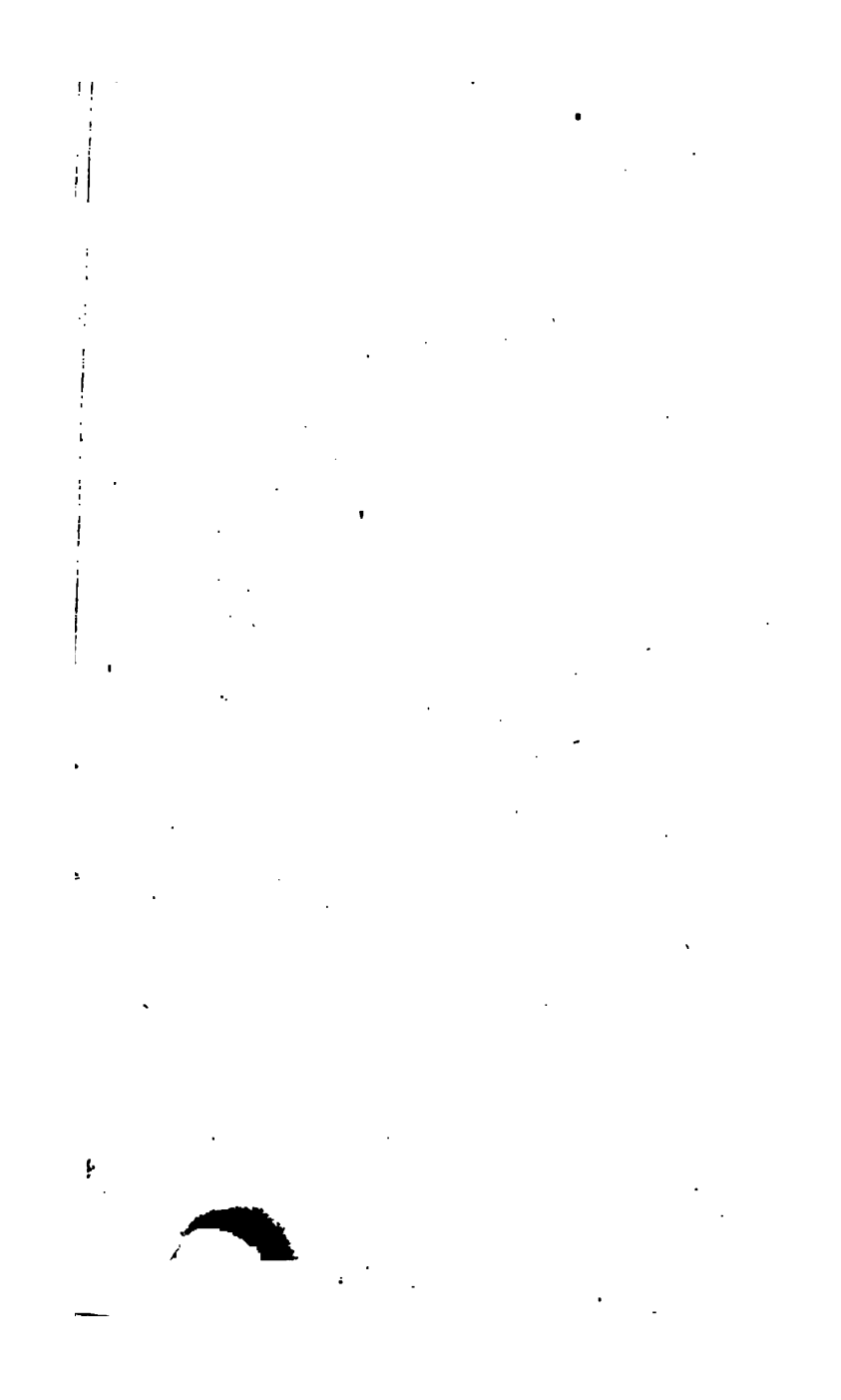
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**1819.**



249. S. 349.



## DEDICATION.



THE noble family of which lady Emily M'Leod forms a distinguished branch, her extensive public benevolence, and her numerous endearing private virtues, leave no room for the inquiring reader to ask who she is: I shall therefore be applauded by the public opinion, for seeking to shelter the present production under the auspices of so brilliant a character. From the tribunal of criticism I have much to fear—if criticism should be employed in the examination of such

a trifle ; but from the goodness of your ladyship's heart I have much to hope. While you, madam, allow the justice of public decision, you will not forget that much indulgence is due to the first attempt of a timid writer, whose tenderest feelings are daily exercised as a mother. In that character, and with these sentiments, I dedicate to your ladyship the following sheets, as a tribute of gratitude for the many favours, which must leave me

Your ladyship's

Most obedient

And most humble servant,

THE AUTHOR.

*April 30, 1806.*

THE

# BRAVO OF BOHEMIA.

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## CHAPTER I.

---

“**B**UT what shall I say, sir, to monsieur St. Aubin?”

“ Say I shall not go ! Why is my peace daily made a sacrifice to the happiness of others ? Peace, did I say ? Well, well, be it so. Will they persuade me that the contracted brow of a gloomy misanthrope may add cheerfulness to their board ? 'Tis mockery : they know me such, and still the hated forms of society are forced upon me. Why am I thus importuned to associate with mankind when I hate the race ?—tortured into beholding

what they call happiness, when my sick soul disowns the term? Time was I too could fondly count each link in nature's most endearing chain; each added tie bound it more firmly round my sanguine heart, and bid it boast a mine of happiness, till I broke the magic spell; one by one, those links were severed, and then it was I found that the isolated being, who, standing alone in creation's vast expanse, had nought to lose, was the happy man. I am that being—have sworn enmity to society, yet must be interrupted!"

"But monsieur St. Aubin kindly believes, sir, that the soothing voice of friendship might reconcile you to the world, and daily regrets the rooted melancholy that consumes my worthy master."

"His commiseration is ill-timed, therefore needs no thanks."

"But he would offer his, sir, for the preservation of his child, and trusts the incident that made him so much your debtor will afford him the long-sought-

for opportunity of a personal conference. Excessive joy at the moment rendered him incapable of expressing his gratitude, and he now anxiously solicits a second interview for that purpose."

" 'Tis a debt easily cancelled ; if he will leave me to my solitude, I am sufficiently repaid. Yesterday I broke through my prescribed rules : what was the result, but awakened misery to myself ? I entered his dwelling, and beheld a scene from which my present nature (I say present, because it was not always thus) recoiled. Monsieur St. Aubin has a wife."

" He has, sir—a most amiable one."


" Perhaps so ; but he is also a father !—yes, yes, I saw them all—but it was too much, and I left them abruptly : they were too happily engaged to notice my actions —But I am weary of the subject : leave me, Oswald ; I would be alone."

Oswald obeyed ; he saw his master's countenance resuming the severity which ever marked it, when conversation had caused a momentary suspension of his usual



austerity, and returned to monsieur St. Aubin with the account of his unsuccessful embassy.

The known fidelity of this servant had, for some years, made him the choice companion of a master, whose eccentric character had long been the general topic of conversation in the neighbourhood; but when each had exhausted their own surmises on singularities for which they were still at a loss to account, and passed opinions equally vague, the subject gradually sunk in oblivion, and left the being who had given rise to it unmolested in his favourite pursuits, save now and then a casual remark from some one who had seen the misanthrope (for such he was usually called) with his accustomed swiftness pacing that part of the seashore that bounded his chateau: this he would do for hours together; and it was at these periods that monsieur St. Aubin, from motives of humanity, not curiosity, had sought an opportunity of drawing him into conversation.



His own residence commanded an extensive view of the grounds belonging to the chevalier, and he had marked, with sincere regret, the evident disquietude of his neighbour. Happy in the bosom of his family, and blest with sufficient to spare for those less gifted with fortune, St. Aubin diffused the smile of peace to all around him. He had, when the chevalier De Valmont first took possession of the chateau, anticipated many pleasures from the addition of such a resident to his little society; but a short time proved the fallacy of these hopes, while observation convinced him the chevalier laboured under the worst of maladies—a mind diseased: but while all his actions were mysterious, and some even ventured to attach the shade of guilt, St. Aubin, with his usual liberality, attributed to unrestrained grief the melancholy which had become habitual: perhaps some domestic calamity, that, like an impetuous tide, bearing all before it, had suffered despondency to dethrone reason, wrecked his share of manly

fortitude, and produced the victim he daily contemplated.—“ Sacred,” he would say, “ be his private sorrows ! But should I suffer a fellow-creature thus to sink, without an effort to save him ? Surely not. Though his wounded mind may not admit a cure, yet the voice of friendship might sooth him to a forgetfulness of its poignancy, while religion cheered him with the assurance of ‘ another and a better world.’ ”

St. Aubin made the attempt, but the repulsive coldness of De Valmont baffled his intention, while the dread of being taxed with impertinence obliged him wholly to resign the hopes he had entertained, of restoring to society a lost, and, perhaps, valuable member ; for such he adhered in believing De Valmont would be.

Of the domestics retained at the chateau, Oswald only was admitted to the more immediate presence of his master. ’Tis true, there was another inhabitant, whose real affinity to its owner was hitherto ob-

scurely known; this was a lovely boy, who evidently regarded him as his father, a belief in general discredited by those who had drawn conclusions from their own observations, and who was sometimes allowed to be the companion of his rambles, though much oftener he wandered alone, unmindful of the surrounding beauties, which nature, in her fairest season, presented to those more rich in happiness than himself, though the severity, and even harshness, of his manners ill accorded with the timidity of youth.

Custom had reconciled Ethelwald to them; and if it could be said the world contained a being for whom the misanthrope, De Valmont, felt interested, it was Oswald—if one whom he loved, it was Ethelwald. Self-secluded from society, and possessed of every qualification derived from a liberal education, he had ample leisure to impart those advantages to his young associate; and there were times when the task appeared a pleasing one.

but at others, for whole days Oswald was desired to keep the boy from his sight.

It not unfrequently happened, when Ethelwald, in the hours of study, had given an exemplary proof of the progress he was making in those attainments the chevalier had pointed out, he would fix on him his full-fraught eyes, till the bursting tears of anguish had, apparently unknown to himself, chased each other in succession. Once he exclaimed—"Such he might have been, but I lost him!"

The astonished boy ventured to say—"Lost whom, my dear sir?"

In a trembling voice he articulated—"My fondest hopes!"

More than ever amazed by the abrupt answer and succeeding silence, which he dared not interrupt, Ethelwald sought Oswald, to whose care he had been entrusted from his earliest remembrance.—"Tell me," he impatiently exclaimed, "of whom does the chevalier speak when he is thus distressed? Had I ever a brother, that

in death he laments? Tell me, my good fellow, was my father always thus unhappy since you lived with him, or is it occasioned by the death of this lamented child alone?"

"Who says he is dead?" returned Oswald; then, as if suddenly recollecting himself, added—"Yes, the loss of his son added much to the trials of my poor master. But you called him father, an appellation, master Ethelwald, you are forbid to use—not from unkindness, but that it reminds him—that is, I mean, he wishes to forget the character."

"Surely that is very strange, Oswald, for I feel a pleasure in repeating the name; and when I think of him as such, would give worlds to clasp him to my bosom, and tell him how beloved he is: but then again I look at him, and dare not make the attempt—yet, if he knew how my heart aches when I see him thus sorrowful, and how it leaps for joy when a momentary smile crosses his features, indeed he *would try to love me more.* Happy child

whose memory is thus fondly cherished ! while Ethelwald only awakens keen reflection in the bosom of his wretched parent ! But, Oswald, I think you said you disbelieved his death : how is that ?”

“ My thoughts, master Ethelwald, when you spoke, were so differently employed, that it is probable I did not rightly understand your question : at all events, I had nearly forgot my master will be waiting for me ; therefore can only say, if you knew his heart, you would have reason to love him still better ; for when he knits his brow, and chills one with every look, it is a hard task to keep his natural disposition from breaking, like the sun, through a cloud. He has had enough to make him what he is—but no doubt, when you are older you will know all.”

The vague unsatisfactory answer of Oswald left an impression on the mind of Ethelwald not easily eradicated. Young as he was, natural strength of mind, aided by the precepts of such a tutor, had expanded reason beyond his years ; that rea-

son now taught him to believe he had much to learn, as Oswald had hinted.

From these reflections, however, he was interrupted by the appearance of the chevalier, who was setting out for his accustomed evening's walk, and by a look indicated he was at liberty to accompany him. He eagerly embraced the privilege, and they had proceeded some distance from the chateau, and were entering on the skirts of a small wood, through which a road led to an obscure but neighbouring village, when the attention of each was arrested by the voice of a child, apparently distressed, exclaiming—"You are not my own Susan; take me back—I want mamma."

"I am going to her," replied a rough unfeminine voice, when the same instant presented a figure that wore the form of a woman, though her variegated tatters and squalid features left the question almost doubtful. She carried a child, who in vain struggled to free itself from her hold, while it repeated, in a voice of in-



fantine anguish—"I will not go with you!"

"It is monsieur St. Aubin's son, sir," said Ethelwald, "for I have repeatedly seen it with his servant."

De Valmont instantly crossed the path she was taking, and imperiously demanded her business with that child?

Awed by the austerity of his manner, and conscious of her own guilt, the woman hesitated a moment, and then said, having found it alone, at the entrance of the road, she was endeavouring to understand to whom it belonged, that she might deliver it in safety.

"Spare yourself that trouble," he replied; "I demand him, and will be answerable to his parents."

Again she hesitated, alleging her extreme poverty could ill dispense with the reward she might obtain for his restoration.

"That you fraudulently gained possession of it," returned the chevalier, "I have no doubt; but if misery has prompted

you to a guilty action, let this (giving her a small sum) save you from a repetition of the crime." He then desired Ethelwald to lead the boy, while in evident disorder he continued walking by his side.

"Will you take me to my own mamma?" said the child.

Ethelwald answered in the affirmative, and exerted himself to render the little fellow forgetful of the alarm he had undergone; but the chevalier maintained a profound silence, till interrupted by Ethelwald saying—"We are near monsieur St. Aubin's, sir: he little thinks how much he is indebted to you."

"I shall not receive his thanks; you may tell him the incident, and join me when you have given up the child."

At that moment a turn of the road presented St. Aubin's house, from which he was hurrying, accompanied by his domestics, each taking a different route. Ethelwald darted forward, and presented to the distressed father his child, whose loss had just before been announced.

"To whom, my dear boy," he exclaimed, "am I indebted for my treasure?"

"The chevalier De Valmont, sir," returned Ethelwald; for the chevalier, to avoid the scene he expected, had hastened on. St. Aubin followed, nor ceased his importunities till they had succeeded in bringing him back to his house, where he learnt that the servant with whom the child was usually entrusted had that evening been visiting a sick relation in the neighbourhood of the village; and that, while preparing some nourishment for her, it was supposed he had strolled from the cottage door, when picked up by the wretched vagrant, from whom it was so providentially rescued.

The servant, on missing him, had returned home a different and nearer way to that which they had taken, and imprudently acquainted madame St. Aubin with the loss of her child. Insensibility on her part succeeded the abrupt information, in which state she remained till the voice of her infant Edmund recalled recollection.

One moment the enraptured parents clasped their smiling boy—in the next would have expressed their gratitude to his preserver, but he had left them abruptly, and knowing that all access to him must now be through his servant Oswald, he was sent for, and entreated by monsieur St. Aubin either to procure him an interview with the chevalier, or prevail on him again to renew his visit: but entreaties with him were always ineffectual, and when they threatened to invade his solitary seclusion, by endeavouring to draw him from it, never failed to make him resolute in his rejection of them.

## CHAPTER II.

.....

YET the self-denial to which the chevalier De Valmont adhered, from a conviction that St. Aubin trespassed on his solitude with a view of turning him from it, did

not extend to Ethelwald ; and whenever a request was made that he might be allowed to spend the day with his family, his permission always followed, with this restriction only, that the result of the visit was not made the theme of conversation on his return.

What St. Aubin's sentiments relative to himself might be, or whence the motive arose that made him thus solicitous of seeking his acquaintance, he did not trouble himself to surmise ; but he had of late ruminated often on the situation of Ethelwald, and those reflections ended in favour of the evident partiality that gentleman had evinced for him since the active part he had taken in the fate of his little boy. —“ I have,” he would say, “ renounced a world become hateful to me ; but Ethelwald has that world yet to enter. Hitherto he has shared a solitude which must soon become irksome to him, because ill adapted to the sanguine expectations of that age, panting to become acquainted with men and manners. Alas, poor boy ! were

I to enumerate the yawning gulfs, the fearful precipices with which it abounds, and by warning teach him to shun, what would it avail? Might he not exclaim—‘The chevalier, from incessantly brooding on past events, tinctured with disappointment, views it through a sombre shade—it is the picture of a distempered mind, that wants reality: does it follow that the thorns which spring in his path must penetrate the roses of expectation strewn in mine? or that the chilling blast which crushed the blossoms of hope in his fate must also cause mine to wither?’ No—he shall not learn by precept what example in that world will so forcibly teach him. A few years hence, and he must fill some station in the busy scene—embark with thousands in the pursuits of wealth, honour, or fame.” This monsieur St. Aubin might assist his adoption of future plans—a task for which he felt himself unfitted, yet knew it must be done.

Happily for Ethelwald, in the present instance, monsieur St. Aubin’s ideas coin-

added with those of the chevalier. More than ever convinced of the little probability there was that his overtures of friendship would be accepted by him, he transferred every attention to Ethelwald, who seldom passed a day without visiting a family to which he grew hourly more attached—perhaps because they were the first beings who had ever appeared attached to him. A mother's care he had never known, and so unlike the affection monsieur St. Aubin cherished for his children was that he experienced from his father, that, at times, he almost doubted if the claims of the chevalier De Valmont were of that nature. Yet then, who and what could *he* be?

This inquiry damped his inmost soul, and was rejected, from a belief that he could rather share the cold repulsive affection to which he had been inured, than learn he had no tie—no relative on earth, or, having any, such as he might blush to have sprung from.

Before the event which introduced Ethel-

wald to his house, monsieur St. Aubin added to a conviction of the cheerless life he must lead at the chateau a belief that he was also a neglected boy, and lamented the fate to which his early years seemed destined; but his joy at finding him quite the reverse was truly parental. He soon discovered the mind of his young friend had kept pace with instruction that evinced the superiority of his tutor, and left nothing for him to add. Still he rejoiced in an opportunity of introducing him more largely to the inhabitants of that world which hitherto he knew only by theory, for at monsieur St. Aubin's house a new scene opened on his imagination: society, friendship, and affection, were terms to which he had, as yet, been a stranger; beneath this roof all were combined, and his little heart bounded with a conviction that he was formed to enjoy each in its fullest extent. Monsieur and madame St. Aubin he venerated; indeed, his regard for the latter amounted to enthusiasm. Hitherto his knowledge of the



sex had been limited wholly to the domestics employed in the chateau, and their inferiority in the household had placed them almost beyond his common observation; when, therefore, he beheld in madame St. Aubin the native elegance that marked her every action, and each day unfolded the refinements of an accomplished mind, he considered her as more than human, and wondered if Heaven had given him such a mother. This thought flashed in a moment on his active imagination, and led him to believe he had at last traced the source of the chevalier's sorrow; and taking the hand of monsieur St. Aubin, while his dark expressive eyes were fixed on his, he said—"Tell me, my dear sir, if Providence thought fit to deprive you of madame St. Aubin and your children, save one, *could* you survive their loss?"

"Your question, my good boy, is somewhat unexpected; still I answer you, I trust I could, for, in the general wreck, you have spared one child; therefore, for

his sake, I would strive to live, independent of that reason whose sacred influence taught me I was not to become the victim of despair because the rod of affliction had been suspended over me. You have named the greatest trial I could encounter; but be assured, Ethelwald, the hand which alone could deprive me of those blessings is every way sufficient to sustain me in it; and I should even then enjoy certain degrees of happiness, if derived solely from contemplating it in my fellow-creatures."

"You would not then, sir, hate all the world, and shrink from the affection of that child, as if his presence was painful to you?"

"Surely not: but I should ask you whence these questions, did not the tenor of them convince me you are alluding, in some respects, to the chevalier De Valmont. It is a subject I have hitherto carefully avoided, for two reasons: in the first place, I wish to render your temporary residence with us cheerful and happy;

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in the next, ill-timed curiosity I despise; therefore, have checked every theme that might, in any way, lead to those singularities that mark the character of the chevalier. If I could have cheered his seclusion by the pleasing offices of friendship, I should have been happy, for on my friendship every child of sorrow has a claim; but he rejects my overtures, therefore I have withdrawn them, and shall never again intrude on that retirement he is, I plainly perceive, desirous of enjoying undisturbed, and have only to regret the plan he has adopted does not seem to promise that happiness his present state of mind evidently requires: for myself, the greatest satisfaction I can ever know will be in proving to the son I am not an ungrateful debtor to the father; and of this, my dear boy, be assured, in me you have not only a friend, on whom, in every future event of life, you may place a firm reliance, but also a second parent, warmly interested in your welfare. Madame St. Aubin will proudly share the title, while

in Katherine, Albert, and Edmund, you have strong advocates for that share of fraternal affection you may feel inclined to divide among them."

Ethelwald heard, but utterance was denied; his heart expanded to receive the proffered inmates. Memory had indelibly recorded the claims of each: he looked at monsieur St. Aubin—again essayed to speak, but it ended only in a pressure of his hand; it told the movements of his soul were returned, and the conversation changed.

Monsieur St. Aubin's professions were not merely such; each day added to the happiness and improvement of Ethelwald, for in all their little parties he was the favoured guest, and with his young associates practised those studies laid down for him by the chevalier De Valmont, for in the best of fathers they also had a valuable instructor.

Edmund was yet too young to enter the paths of learning; but Albert and Kathe-

rine were indefatigable in the pursuit. Thus happily passed the fleeting years of childhood, for even those hours now spent at the chateau were cheered by the anticipation of again returning to the St. Aubin family: yet his affection for them did not lessen what he felt for the chevalier, who, notwithstanding he still maintained the cold unfeeling apathy that marked his exterior conduct, was, he considered, his father, and had, in many instances of his life, confirmed Oswald's assertions, that his heart was in constant warfare with his actions, and that though, from some hidden cause, that austerity was become habitual to him, it was not a plant of nature's growth, a reflection that rendered him comparatively happy, from warranting a belief that time might yet steal on this cherished woe, and weaken the powerful dominion so long usurped over every nobler faculty of his devoted parent.

"We were impatiently expecting you, Ethelwald," said Albert, as he one evening entered the house; "for we have a vi-

sitor whom my father has interested much on your account by the detail of Edmund's adventure, with other little matters respecting you, which he is so fond of relating, from a wish that all his friends should become as partial to you as we are."

"Indeed, Albert, my obligations to monsieur St. Aubin are already such as no period of my life can enable me to cancel, yet the debt is every day accumulating: but tell me, who is this visitor?—a welcome one, if my judgment is to rest on the pleasure which pervades your features."

"Even so—it is a brother of madame St. Aubin's, who has been absent some years; and the happiness his unexpected return has given my mother cannot but extend to her children, since you, who so well know us, know also we are, as it were, a machine moving on the same principle, each actuated by the impulse which governs the other. But if we detain you thus, my father will imagine we are fore-

stalling the pleasure he proposes himself in the introduction, by making you half acquainted with general Durand before the interview."

Ethelwald's curiosity to see the stranger kept pace with the wish of his friend to introduce him, and was amply repaid when monsieur St. Aubin, presenting him to the general, said—"This, also, my dear sir, though the child of my adoption only, has claims on my affection that urge me to solicit a share of your notice for him; this I do from a conviction that when better known, he will need no advocate to secure him your esteem."

Never had he beheld a more prepossessing countenance than that of general Durand; neither the hardships of war, or the various climes to which a military life had, for many years, exposed him, triumphed over the strong resemblance those features still wore to madame St. Aubin: that he was her brother was a sufficient passport to Ethelwald's heart; but there was, independent of this, a something in his whole

deportment that of itself demanded respect.

Shaking the hand monsieur St. Aubin had put into his, he said—"At this period of life, my good boy, your list of friends is doubtless too full for the admission of an old soldier; I will therefore place my name at the back; and should you, some years hence, find *that list* insufficient, you will still have a resource: remember general Durand indorsed it, and, rest assured, will not reject your claims on his friendship, when presented for acceptance."

Encouraged by his affability, Ethelwald replied—"I am, indeed, sir, rich in friends, since allowed to add your name to those I already possess in this family, beside whom there exists only one being interested for the fate of Ethelwald."

A tear, urged by this reflection, trembled in his eyes; but hastily passing his hand across ere it burst its confines, the truant escaped unnoticed, and the conversation became general.

Among other topics, general Durand



inquired of Albert what were monsieur St. Aubin's future designs relative to himself, or if any plan had been proposed for his advancement in life?

"I can only say, sir, my father's commands have hitherto been so perfectly consonant with my own feelings as to leave me no will but his; whatever, therefore, his superior judgment shall point out, as most conducive to my interest, and satisfactory to himself, cannot for a moment want my ready acquiescence. If I have a preference, it is for the army; and here, happily, his wishes also meet mine, for in our late conversation on the subject, he has rather promoted, than otherwise, my propensity for a military life."

"And I will second it," said the general, "with my warmest interest. It is now some years since I paid my personal respects to the court of Vienna, but have reason to believe time has not erased these weather-beaten features from the memory of my beloved and imperial master, since ~~that~~ that period, as well as the fairest of my

life, has been devoted to his service. Sanctioned by him to retire from the busy scene, and pass the residue of my days in peace, I go first to assure him, though I lay down my arms, because age and hard service have rendered them less active than formerly, yet my heart still retains the patriotic ardour that fired my younger days. Tell me, Albert, shall I, at the same time, present a volunteer, ready to become a candidate for the honours I so reluctantly resign?—shall I add, that in retiring from the stage of glory, I proudly offer a descendant, eager to save those laurels from fading, which age would steal from my wrinkled brow?——”

Albert hastily interrupted him, with an assurance that his father's permission could but follow a proposal so advantageous to himself, and that time must prove his gratitude for the generous offer.

St. Aubin remained a delighted auditor, and waited only to hear his son's decision before he thanked the general, in the warmest terms, for such an early proof of kind-

ness to his family. His mother also heard, and though it gave rise to a maternal struggle between interest and affection, the future advantage of her child surmounted every selfish consideration, and she rejoiced that her Albert would enter the world under such favourable auspices as she well knew the interest of general Durand warranted.

Katherine's mind, passing over every intermediate event, had already arrived at the moment of separation from this beloved brother ; she looked at him with increasing tenderness, heaved a sigh of unfeigned sorrow, and hastened to the window to conceal her rising emotions.

\* But there was yet another silent and deeply-interested hearer of the whole.—“ Happy Albert !” he exclaimed, as he returned dejectedly to the chateau, “ you then have found a friend whose experienced hand will lead you to the paths of honour, while the wretched Ethelwald, deprived of his loved companion, is left to linger out, in hateful solitude, the re-

sidue of an inactive life. No," he continued, "that cannot be!—the chevalier De Valmont does not intend succeeding years should pass thus unprofitably; he has not stored my mind with useful knowledge, expanding my ideas, only to make a life of indolence more insupportable. Perhaps his plans for my future destination, clashing with his private sorrows, are, from time to time, procrastinated, and may yet be explained, when I least expect it. But then this torturing suspense! who will sustain me when Albert is gone?" Katherine involuntarily crossed his mind, and he felt pleased with the alternative—but it was momentary.

"Yes," he continued, "the gentle Katherine will, perhaps, love me even better, when Albert is not here to divide her affection; she will then need ~~all my~~ attention to compensate her for his loss; but I shall have become a listless companion, and even her loved society will have lost a charm when he is torn from us. I will seek the

chevalier, break through my prescribed bounds, and know his decision: if he rejects my entreaties to follow the friend of my youth, I will throw myself on the humanity of the general, try to urge my solicitation of being allowed to follow Albert, even at an humble distance, in his military career, till opportunity and my own conduct induce him to give me a partial share of that interest reserved for my friend."

Pleased with the suggestion, he quickened his pace, and at the gate of the chateau met Oswald, of whom he inquired whether he might be permitted to see the chevalier that evening?

His own reflections had hitherto prevented his noticing an unusual gloom on the countenance of this faithful servant; but when, in answer to his question, Oswald replied—"I came to seek you for that purpose," he hastily exclaimed—"For what purpose?—My father—tell me, Oswald, is he ill?"

"Not, I trust, alarmingly so; but there

are symptoms of indisposition not usual in him."

"Whom then shall I send for?" returned the agitated boy. "Hasten to monsieur St. Aubin; he will best know what should be done."

"That must not be, master Ethelwald; my master has been expecting you some time, but forbid the introduction of any other person; therefore, our doing so would only irritate, and perhaps increase the evil."

Ethelwald reluctantly yielded to this opinion, and hastened to the chamber of the chevalier. He was either sleeping, or in so profound a reverie that the cautious steps of Ethelwald did not arouse him, and he silently seated himself beside his bed, scarcely daring to breathe; he watched his pallid features, and with fearful anxiety fancied a change in them that did not really exist. The visionary prospect that occupied his imagination during the walk was now vanished, Albert's good fortune unenvied, and he had no longer a wish to leave the parent whose declining

health might need his every exertion. These reflections were interrupted by the chevalier's repeating, in a low and indistinct voice—"What if he is not my child, I have sworn to protect him—I have done so, but he must leave me."

Though he would have given worlds to hear more, such was the agitation of his spirits, that he rashly exclaimed—"Never, no, never, sir, shall they tear me from you!" At the same time, falling on his knees, he clasped the extended hand of De Valmont, and burst into tears.

"What means this unusual emotion, my poor boy? Oswald has, I fear, unguardedly magnified the common result of a cold, for such I am willing to believe is my present indisposition, which will cease with the cause."

"But why then, sir, am I to leave you?—what have I done to induce you to send me from you?—and where am I to go?"

"Your own good sense," he replied, "must convince you we cannot always remain together: the path in life unhappily

pointed out for me offers no inducement for the natural expectation of youth ; neither have I cultivated your understanding to become the useless member of society I have long been. What has effected this cruel reverse of what I was cannot now be told you—in some future period of your life, an explanation of many events may be essential ; till then the subject is too painful for remembrance, and must return to that oblivion from whence your premature appearance this evening has drawn it. Imagining myself, as usual, alone, I gave way to a propensity long indulged, that of intense thought, during which I frequently repeat aloud the suggestions of the moment. I was to-night musing on a subject long contemplated, though my habitual reluctance of conversation, and a fear that you might not accede to my proposal, has hitherto made me delay entering on it.”

“ Why then, my dear sir, choose a moment when you are too ill to encounter the fatigue? Be assured, I can have no



will but yours; defer, then, till a more favourable opportunity, what I must learn too soon—the cruel mandate you have pronounced, that I must leave you.”

“ Delays, Ethelwald, are productive of danger. I dispatched Oswald for you, because, warned by my present indisposition, I would no longer add procrastination to the errors which have already marked the actions of my past life. I have long seen the evident satisfaction you derive from your acquaintance with monsieur St. Aubin’s family, as also the visible restraint you put on those feelings which naturally prompt you to talk of the pleasure enjoyed with them on your return to me: but domestic happiness is, of all others, a subject I can least bear, therefore have always damped those advancements on your side that waited only encouragement on mine to make you eloquent in their praise: still I have never discouraged your increasing partiality to them, for many reasons. At the same time, your frequent absence left me more leisure for my solitary pursuits:

- I was persuaded you were happy ; I found you no way remiss in your studies, but rather that your progress in them strengthened. I learnt, also, there was a son, between whom and yourself there not only existed a similarity of ideas, but also of age ; and this last circumstance led me to hope, that when he had made a choice, or his father wisely selected some plan for his future pursuits, you also might adopt the same, or, at least, form a wish of becoming, in some respects, freed from the restraint which a residence under my roof must impose, and have anxiously waited in expectation of your leading to the subject. This night I determined on asking if you had yet given it a thought, or if young St. Aubin was always to remain with his family ?”

Ethelwald answered, monsieur St. Aubin's intentions relative to the settlement of his son had, he believed, till that day, been in some respects undecided ; but the arrival of general Durand, a brother of madame St. Aubin, had terminated every

anxiety, by his undertaking to strengthen his nephew's promotion in the army with that interest a long succession of bravery on his part had rendered unquestionable.

“Then you are going to lose your friend?—the chateau will of course become more gloomy than even before your acquaintance commenced?”

“This evening, sir, I dared to think so, and was returning with a resolution of entreating your permission for my entering the army with him, but Oswald's intelligence disarmed my project, while reflection urged me to ask this heart if I was ingrate enough to propose leaving you?”

“It was reason, not ingratitude, prompted your wish of doing so; and you have now my commands not to suppress it. I am pleased your preference leads to a military path; it is indeed the only one, in these times, a young man with any expectations, ought to choose. But having in part relieved my mind from the pressure it has long sustained, we will defer entering more largely on the subject till

to-morrow. I am now trespassing on your rest, my good boy ; therefore retire to your room, and send Oswald to me."

Never had Ethelwald, at one period, experienced so much kindness from him, and never had he felt so reluctant to leave him.—" Will you not permit me this once to supply Oswald's place, sir ? Indeed I want no rest ; I am ill prepared to take any, till assured your indisposition is really as slight as you represent it."

" My complaints, Ethelwald, originating in a distempered mind, admit no cure, and are therefore generally confined to my own breast. Anxiety for you has lately pressed much on that mind, and by its effects proved to me that sorrow has sapped this fabric more than I was aware of, for I have to-day, I believe, alarmed Oswald greatly : I am now, however, comparatively well, and shall, when we meet in the morning, be myself again ; but shall insist on your leaving me, with an assurance of my endeavouring to take some repose."

Ethelwald obeyed, but in bidding him adieu, he ventured to raise the hand he still held to his lips; nor did the chevalier oppose the motion, but again wished him a good night; and it was not till Ethelwald had been some minutes seated in his own room, he could persuade himself the few last hours of his existence had presented realities. One moment he persisted in believing his father much worse than he had imagined; torturing himself with apprehensions the affectionate farewell he had taken of him would be the last, he would return, at least to the door of his chamber, and watch there during the night: then his firm reliance on Oswald's fidelity, and that habitual fear of offending the chevalier or disputing his commands, determined him to wait the event of morning, when he was promised the privilege of an early admittance.

His mind next reverted to the purport of their conversation, and hope, for the instant, surmounted despair. If his father should recover, and succeed in procuring

him a commission, what a happy reverse of his past life ! While Oswald lived, he could leave his father in safety, because Oswald was all the world to him. Then, if destiny should place him in the same regiment with Albert, every wish would be gratified ; they could converse of the beloved relatives left at home ; he should hear occasionally of the worthy St. Aubin, of his revered mother (for such in their cheerful hours he constantly styled madame St. Aubin) ; and Katherine, when she thought of her brother, might also remember him : all combined to promise a succession of happiness, and the romantic ardour of youth had sketched a fairy scene of eternal sunshine. Reason gave Fancy the reins, and for a few moments he contemplated her work with ecstasy, till an envious cloud, passing over the brilliant horizon that decked his future prospects, by degrees spread its baneful shade over the whole : this was the chevalier De Valmont's exclamation—"What if he

is not my child, I have sworn to protect him !”

Staggered by the recollection of these words, and unable to fathom the purport of them, he would willingly have excluded them altogether, as an intrusion on his more fascinating picture, by endeavouring to believe they might not allude to himself: but the attempt proved its fallacy, and a heartfelt sigh followed the conviction that he was then only a dependent on the same benevolence he had seen extended to many of the neighbouring cottagers round the chateau.

Oswald had, more than once, reproved him for using the term father, but carefully concealed the reason. Why this mystery? As the child of charity, he must have gratefully received even that degree of notice, which, supposing himself his son, had often appeared in the chevalier De Valmont not only unkind, but also unnatural. He would acquaint monsieur St. Aubin with his situation, and ask if

he was not justified in demanding an explanation so requisite to his peace—that of knowing who he was. But again it occurred, if an orphan, hitherto supported and protected, was he to sting the benefactor to whom he was indebted, by wringing from him information so guarded, and which he had hinted should be revealed at a future period? Pride also whispered, though the St. Aubins loved and pitied him as the child of De Valmont, that love might not extend to the offspring of unknown, and perhaps less worthy parents. He would, therefore, trust to the promised period for an elucidation, and till then, in his own breast confine the galling secret, though assured it must mar every anticipated pleasure.

Wearied with the conflict his mind had sustained, he threw himself on the bed; but his sleep was not as usual undisturbed, for when summoned to the breakfast-table, his pale and languid countenance plainly told the refreshment of nature had been denied.



The chevalier, who was already seated, noticed in a moment the alteration, and attributing it wholly to anxiety on his account, was beginning to reprove him for giving way to such excess of feeling; but Ethelwald begged that his happiness at seeing him recovered so much beyond his expectation, might receive no alloy from his displeasure, as, though he rejoiced to find his fears had in part been causeless, they were such as he could not suppress.

The chevalier, impatient to enter on the conversation of the preceding evening, began by saying—"I have been thinking Ethelwald, monsieur St. Aubin may now prove his friendship by putting you in a method to procure a commission in the Austrian army, which, of all others, should choose you to enter."

"It is that, sir, in which general Durand will place Albert."

"But that motive does not altogether bias me, though I find my wishes may be fulfilled by it without an infringement on yours: his interest will doubtless procur

promotion for his nephew, but I would have yours founded on merit. Pecuniary obligations I can owe no man; neither would I subject you to receive a favour. Whatever sum may be requisite for the purchase of rank, you can command; and if you can prevail on monsieur St. Aubin to make *that purchase*, it will save me the pain of endeavouring to recollect some one on whom I have a claim to settle this business, which is at present the only one that distresses me."

"He will, I am sure, sir, gladly accept the charge, when I have your permission to name it," replied Ethelwald.

"That you have now then; and if it is requisite we should meet on the occasion, it must be soon, but it must be here."

Ethelwald's heart beat high with the varied emotions of gratitude and expectation; but anxious as he was to express the former, no opportunity was allowed him, for the chevalier De Valmont, though evidently more kind and attentive than

formerly, had still, with returning health, resumed much of his usual reserve, and Ethelwald fancied he was now as impatient to terminate the business that burdened on a wish of removing him from the chateau; he therefore rejoiced when their breakfast finished, as he was left at liberty to seek the society of his beloved St. Aubin, never so truly desirable as at this moment.

On communicating the purport of his visit, a general joy prevailed. Monsieur St. Aubin readily undertook the office assigned him, and Albert averred he should leave home without a pang, since he was to be the companion of his journey.

General Durand, who had been absent, now joined the party, and on being acquainted with the business, shared the prevailing satisfaction, declaring he never more regretted the advance of age than now, that it prevented his leading to the field two such youthful heroes as he foretold the boys would prove; and added—

"But why am I to be denied the pleasure of presenting a commission to my young friend, when I solicit one for Albert?"

Ethelwald expressed his acknowledgments, but said it was a favour the chevalier De Valmont would decline, from an idea that the little commerce he had with the world precluded the propriety of his receiving an obligation from any one.

"This father of yours is a strange being, Ethelwald; but as I would have every man happy in his own way, we will say no more about it. I shall this day write to Vienna, and make some inquiry before I set out as to what is doing in the military world, therefore shall take up my abode with you, to wait the event of these letters, till which time nothing further can be done."

The whole family expressed the pleasure his longer continuance with them must afford, and entreated he would not think of depriving them so soon of his valuable society. The intermediate space was passed

in pleasing anticipation by the young men, paternal solicitude on the part of monsieur and madame St. Aubin, while the chevalier De Valmont evinced a restless impatience that could not escape the notice of Ethelwald.

At length the moment arrived (equally welcome to all) which announced the general's servant, who had been dispatched with letters for his respective friends, including that which was to decide the fate of Albert and Ethelwald.

Having unsealed the packet, and silently perused part of its contents, he congratulated St. Aubin on the success of his application, adding, the friend on whose power he more immediately relied had assured him, such was the demand for officers at that crisis, he need not apprehend a refusal to his request, which he had already made known—that he was happy in an opportunity of convincing general Durand he should, on all occasions, feel the same pleasure in executing the commands he might honour him with, as he

now did in saying every requisite step having been taken relative to the commissions, they would be forwarded to him shortly after the arrival of his letter—that he trusted the young friends, for whom he was thus zealous, influenced by the precepts of such a leader, would, in part, replace that ornament the Austrian army was about to lose in him—nor did he doubt it, after the high encomiums passed on each; and concluded by saying, they must not expect a long reprieve, as it was highly probable they would be expected to join their regiment immediately, a strong reinforcement having been demanded for the protection of Schweidnitz, which was at that time in danger of a siege.

The latter sentence did not escape madame St. Aubin; a sigh of maternal anguish reached her lips, and rendered inarticulate those thanks she would have offered her brother, while St. Aubin said—“My boy’s abilities, as a soldier, are yet to be

proved; he has hitherto possessed a grateful heart, and when he forgets its debt to you, I also must cease to remember he is my child."

"Never, never can an action of mine, my father, make me forfeit that sacred claim, the value of which is enhanced as the period approaches that must call me from you."

"And will nobody answer for the gratitude of Ethelwald?—must the feelings pent in his own breast be known but to himself?"

Nature! how eloquent is thy expression—it reached the general's heart, and spoke volumes in his behalf.—"Ethelwald," he exclaimed, "I read your thoughts, and know that they are too big for utterance; but you have a powerful pleader in my heart, and while St. Aubin is authorized to vouch for the future conduct of Albert, I will be solely responsible for yours."

St. Aubin, affectionately pressing the hand of Ethelwald, said—"Pardon me,

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my dear boy, this seeming inattention to your feelings, which, be assured, was not designed, you must, I think, be convinced; neither has the general yet to learn my regard for you has ever bordered closely on that my own children experience."

Ethelwald acknowledged the truth of this assertion, and ventured to believe he never could become unmindful of what he owed him.

It was then agreed St. Aubin should pay his personal respects at the chateau, to acquaint the chevalier with the intelligence received, as also to consult with him on the preparations requisite to be made for the occasion; and as he had permission to do so, returned with Ethelwald, who, in introducing him, enjoyed a latent hope that the interview might lead to succeeding ones when he was far away.

The usual compliments of the day having passed, with some degree of embarrassment on both sides, from a retrospect of the past—"You have hitherto," said De



Valmont, “ found me an inhospitable neighbour, monsieur St. Aubin; but custom has reconciled me to a retirement that unfits me for what the world calls sociability, therefore I can offer you no other apology; but my acknowledgments are due for your attentions to this poor boy, whose conduct, I trust, will make you a better return than it is in my power to do.”

“ I ask no other return than an opportunity of convincing the chevalier De Valmont the preservation of his child can never be erased from the memory of St. Aubin.”

De Valmont abruptly changed the subject, by asking if any accounts had yet been received from Vienna?

He replied in the affirmative, and entered fully on the purport of the letter which, he said, had caused his present intrusion.

“ It cannot be such, since you are inclined still to serve me in a point so essential to Ethelwald’s welfare, after repeated instances of my apparent rudeness—for

such those who know me not must believe it. With respect to pecuniary matters, it is my present intention to make him an allowance suited only to the rank he will at first bear, as for many reasons it is my wish he should enter the army as a soldier of fortune. What your judgment may deem requisite in every other respect, I shall accede to; and if, in providing for your son, you will also include the wants of Ethelwald, I will gladly reimburse the expence."

St. Aubin readily accepted the proposal, and, after a few commonplace topics, took his leave, more than ever regretting the unhappy destiny which doomed such talents as the chevalier De Valmont evidently possessed to wither in cheerless seclusion.

As the period approached which was to separate a party hitherto so united, various were the sensations that actuated each. Madame St. Aubin and Katherine, busily employed in preparations for the in-

tended departure, would frequently sit for hours at their work, dejectedly silent, save now and then a responsive sigh spoke the similarity of their thoughts. Monsieur St. Aubin passed the interval, enforcing those rules that he wished should bias through life the conduct of Albert and Ethelwald. The former, happy in the possession of such a parent, had hitherto never known a care, or felt the impression of sorrow : there were times, when an idea of separation from the ties that now surrounded him threw a shade on his natural vivacity ; but its influence was momentary, for imagination led him to the enjoyment of those pleasures so often anticipated in the world he was now going to enter. True, his father had carefully delineated the various characters he would there meet ; with a solicitude equally paternal, pointed out those whose examples he should imitate, and as anxiously warned him of those he ought to shun. With such precepts, how could he err ?—Besides, Ethelwald

would still be with him, and Ethelwald had constantly been ~~the~~ standard of his actions.

Far different were Ethelwald's feelings: the nearer the period approached that would remove him from the chevalier De Valmont, the stronger his attachment to him became; and those scenes in which his infant years had passed, though divested of the usual indulgences that early age demand, were, now that he was about to quit them, more than ever endeared. With such Mentors as the worthy St. Aubin and the chevalier De Valmont, he could scarcely deviate from the paths of rectitude; but, unsupported by such counsel, dared he rely on the government of his own actions? And if Albert's natural vivacity should plunge him in errors, from which the voice of friendship could, not restrain him, would St. Aubin acquit *him* of negligence?—for though in age the difference was not obvious, the solidity of Ethelwald had always given him a power

over the more volatile spirits of his friend. Again he reverted to the fatal secret that concerned himself—a resistless impulse, that whispered the mystery attached to his birth might mar his future promotion, if not his every pretension to happiness; yet he saw no clue for his emancipation but that from which every sentiment of gratitude recoiled—namely, forcing from the chevalier an explanation he seemed anxious to defer, and which, he had asserted, was a subject too painful for remembrance. He thought of again questioning Oswald, but an innate pride persuaded him it was a meanness to which he ought not submit, and he endeavoured to dismiss his own painful ideas. The chevalier De Valmont appeared more than ever restless: daily more absorbed in thought, still he evaded the theme to which Ethelwald would have imperceptibly led him; and when he did converse, it was either admonitions for his future conduct, or commonplace topics, evidently started to conceal emotions too visible to escape the penetration of Ethelwald.

CHAPTER III.  
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“THIS hint of my friend's,” said the general, “relative to the necessity of our joining immediately on the arrival of the commissions, has somewhat deranged a plan I had laid down, and from which I shall unwillingly recede, having promised myself much pleasure in its completion. We can certainly sit by our own firesides, and at the same time, in imagination, travel over the Pyrenees, wander among the romantic beauties of the Apennines, and admire those with which the Alps abound—an indulgence for which we are doubtless much indebted to many elegant authors, some of whom have not only admirably, but also accurately described scenes that must afford ample scope for the fertile imagination; but it was my intention these lads should have an opportunity

of enjoying, in its full extent, the pleasure I once, in my early days, derived from a tour over part of them; and this might have been done without any material infringement on our time—I say our, because I shall return to Austria with them, and, in so doing, fully determined to have taken the route I had planned in my own mind, not only from a wish of gratifying them, but also making probably a last visit to Gascony and its environs, where I have some few friends, but none I am more desirous of seeing than the chevalier Le Brun.”

“And is it not possible, sir,” said Albert, with his usual impatience, “still to afford us that gratification?”

“I fear not,” he replied, “in the way I could have wished, because it is not sufficient for me that I travel through a country where nature has bestowed so much to demand admiration, merely to say I have passed such a road, seen such a place—I must also know the road and place to which I allude, to do which, I must be

allowed to stop and admire it. This pleasure I had meant should be yours, from a conviction you have minds suited to the enjoyment of scenery surpassing description; but if it clashes with duty, how then, Ethelwald?"

"It admits no alternative, sir; and we must content ourselves with a partial view of that sublimity we cannot be allowed to contemplate more minutely—a circumstance I shall nevertheless seriously regret."

St. Aubin interrupted them, by observing, if general Durand wished to take Gascony in his way, and was inclined to make Lombes, where the chevalier Le Brun resided, a place of rendezvous for a few days, while they visited the adjacent parts, he could, on the arrival of papers from Vienna, forward them in safety to him there; this would afford an opportunity of satisfying in part the curiosity he had excited, and which he also wished to gratify as much as possible.

The general saw no reasonable objections to the proposed arrangement; and it



was then determined, if the chevalier De Valmont assented to their plan, they could be prepared to set out within three days; and that no time might be lost, Ethelwald, on his return to the chateau that evening, was to state the projected route, and on the result of his communication they were to decide.

“ We shall only,” observed the general, “ be stealing a few days’ march on these good ladies, who are so busily employed in preparing for the departure of our young soldiers—a business that, I have an idea, would make greater progress, but for the anticipation of a parting that must, sooner or later, take place.”

Madame St. Aubin smiled through the tears she vainly endeavoured to conceal; while Katherine, less heroic in the cause, dared not raise her eyes, lest they should encounter those of the general, which were archly fixed on her as he spoke.

Ethelwald took an early opportunity of entering on the subject of his departure to the chevalier, but was more than ever as-

tonished at the visible disorder it occasioned in him; every feature spoke the emotions of his soul and the agony of his thoughts; for he spoke not, nor had recovered himself, when Ethelwald had ceased speaking, and waited in fearful anxiety the result.

At length, as if unconscious of his presence, he said—"What then!—who knows me there?—De Valmont's sorrows live only in his own breast; yet his adamant heart bursts not its bounds—can live, Adelaide—yes, even without thee!"

Ethelwald, terrified by his appearance, still gazed on him in silence. Twice he crossed the room with an unsteady pace, and leaned for a moment against the window, till a deep sigh recalled his vacant recollection.

"Ethelwald," he said, "I am unwell; but a few minutes, and the effect will wear off: these starts of my unhappy malady alarm you too much, and I shall rejoice when, in scenes more suited to your

age, you are removed for ever from the remembrance of them."

"That, sir, can never be; the child whom you have reared cannot know happiness while yours is imperfect."

"Such," he replied, "it must ever be: time has no Lethean power to erase the written characters of misery from my heated brain. Even now the mention of Gascony touched a chord that vibrated to madness, for it brought a retrospect of days gone by for ever—of beings who are no longer sensible of the torture their memory can inflict on this stubborn heart: but it is past, and we will forget the subject—suffice it to say, in resigning you to the care of monsieur St. Aubin and his brother, I must be satisfied with what they judge most proper, and need be no more consulted on the occasion. I shall hear of your welfare, and trust also to hear your actions are every way consistent with the character you are going to assume: if they are such as your own heart, on a retrospect,

can approve, you need no other assurance of my approbation. But remember, when every thing is adjusted for your departure, we must wave the ceremony of a formal adieu, to me at all times unpleasant."

Ethelwald bowed, and finding himself as little inclined for conversation as the chevalier, soon retired to his own apartment—not to sleep, for that, from a variety of causes, was, he found, impossible; neither would he allow his thoughts to dwell on the scene he had just witnessed, from a conviction it was useless; he therefore employed himself in placing ready for removal such things as he wished to take, and properly disposing of those which, as less useful, were to be left at the chateau.

On his return to the St. Aubins, he mentioned only that part of his conversation with the chevalier relative to the power he had given the general and himself over his future destiny. It was then agreed that on the following morning they should commence their journey, and

for that purpose Ethelwald was to partake with them an early breakfast.

On the removal of supper, which that night went untasted from table at the chateau, the chevalier De Valmont, drawing his chair, apparently unconscious of the motion, nearer to Ethelwald, addressed him, by saying—"I had this night half resolved to enter on a task which, however, I now find myself unequal to, since I dare not make the attempt. But of this be assured, could the partial explanation I proposed entering into have in any way promoted your present happiness or interest, I would have surmounted the trial; but your destiny and mine are too closely allied to admit a cloudless scene: yet there are still some particulars in my life that may be essential to your future welfare, and they shall be made known to you. Left in my solitude, I may transmit to paper incidents my lips have not power to recite; and when a favourable opportunity occurs, they shall be conveyed to you. In

return, I ask only your assurance (extorted oaths I despise) that whatever I entrust to you shall not be made a subject for other comments, or revealed, even in confidence, to your friend."

"Were that possible, sir," said Ethelwald, with energy, "I should indeed be unworthy the protection I have so long enjoyed."

The chevalier, fixing on him an expressive look, in which pity, tenderness, and still a degree of severity, were blended, said—"You have never, it is true, experienced the trivial indulgences in which some children are reared; but tell me, Ethelwald, have you known the want of a father?"

"Never—never, sir! and were I certain ——" he would have proceeded to say—"that you were my father," but utterance failed.

The chevalier continued—"Your own penetration, and my unguarded conduct, have given birth to surmises for which you have no just foundation: when you shall

have found a father whose claims on your duty are stronger than mine, to him I will resign you; till then, remember the chevalier De Valmont supports that character. We meet in the morning; till then, farewell." Saying which, he extended his hand to Ethelwald, who, pressing it with fervour, retired, for the last time, to that pillow on which his infant head had so often reclined, undisturbed by the varied sensations now succeeding each other.

Before he had quitted it in the morning, Oswald was at the bedside to say the chevalier must decline the interview named the preceding evening, but had desired him to say he should expect letters on his arrival in Austria. He then expressed his own wishes for Ethelwald's welfare with the honest simplicity inherent to himself, while the former felt relieved and happy in an opportunity of consigning the chevalier De Valmont to his peculiar care, and obtained Oswald's assurance that his master's comforts would ever be his consideration.

"And who knows, master Ethelwald," he added, "but this storm may yet blow over? Old as I am, I have not despaired of once more seeing his worthy heart rejoice: happiness and he have, it is true, been many years separated, but something whispers me 'tis not all past recovery."

"I should feel happy, Oswald, in being the instrument to promote such a desired event. Neither is that impossible," he continued, "for I have known strange things to——"

At that moment the chevalier's bell rang, and Oswald dared not disobey the summons. Unconscious he had added poignancy to the suspense already endured, he hastily pronounced his farewell, while Ethelwald in vain loitered for an opportunity of again speaking to him.

The chevalier, either mistrusting his presence, or having really wanted him, found employment till the disappointed Ethelwald had reached the breakfast-room at monsieur St. Aubin's, in which, of the family-party, Katherine only had made



her appearance, and she, evidently unconscious of his entrance, still kept her seat in a window, through which she was intently gazing. She started on his addressing her, and hastily averted her eyes, from a conviction they would betray the feelings to which she had given free scope, while Ethelwald, with affectionate solicitude, said—"Were I Albert, I should reprove those tears, my sweet friend; as it is, I have no power over them."

"And why not?" she returned, with the smile of artless simplicity: "the claims of each on my affection have been too long united to divide the regret I feel in losing you, and the tear which falls for the loss of Albert is chased by that which whispers Ethelwald is going also. But I had meant to be more heroic," she continued, "for madame St. Aubin's sake, who, I fear, will ill sustain the separation, when unluckily seating myself opposite our favourite walk in the grounds, tenacious memory reminded me, when next I sought it, the loved companions of my

youth would be far away, and I already felt the vacuum their departure must occasion."

Again the starting tear trembled on its verge, and her voice faltered. Ethelwald, who had gazed in silence on her as she spoke, now felt emotions for which he could not account. As the daughter of monsieur and madame St. Aubin, the sister of Albert he had long loved; Katherine taught his heart to acknowledge her as a beloved relative, and, satisfied that he retained a brother's share in her regard, questioned his heart no farther as to her own claims on it: but though he would have risked his life to screen her from even the approach of sorrow, there was now a gratification in knowing she had wept for him. He forgot Albert had an equal, nay, a prior claim to the tears he had witnessed, and her artless confession withdrew a veil that had hitherto concealed her power over him.

"Custom, mademoiselle St. Aubin," he replied, "has made my society a requisite

appendage to Albert's in the frequent rambles we have had together; but a short time will reconcile you to the deprivation, for these scenes will still present their annual verdure, monsieur and madame St. Aubin will still be present to point out their beauties, and two beings only will be removed from the happy circle that have so often met in them: of these Albert commences an unclouded career; but I must drag a lengthened chain, cheered only by a remembrance of hours that can return no more."

"Surely, Ethelwald, my brother will sometimes be permitted to visit his family, and will not the same inducement bring you to the chateau?"

"True, Katherine; a few years hence I may return to hear mademoiselle St. Aubin has found a friend to supply the place of Ethelwald."

"Then," she replied, "you must come prepared to allow him a place in your warmest friendship also; for I assure you, when that is the case, he shall be worthy

your esteem. At present," she continued, with an assumed gaiety, "I have but two beaux, and to prove their claims are mutual, the memento I have prepared for each during their absence is the same;" in saying which, she presented a military sash, which she begged he would wear as a pledge of her regard.

He eagerly kissed the hand she extended with it, and was going to reply, when general Durand, with Albert and monsieur St. Aubin, entered the room, and inquired for madame St. Aubin.

Katherine, wishing to escape the penetrating glances of her uncle, availed herself of the excuse, and left them to inform her mother the breakfast was waiting. In a few minutes they returned together, and madame St. Aubin's dejected countenance plainly indicated the little ascendancy she had acquired over those maternal feelings she evidently strove to suppress. Yet, as if unwilling that the gloom which pervaded her own breast should extend its in-

fluence to those around her, she made a last and more successful effort; and when the servant entered to say the carriage was quite ready, she had gained a degree of fortitude that enabled her for the moment to conquer the habitual weakness ascribed to women.

Katherine, supported by such an example, endeavoured to imitate what she could not but admire; and after an affectionate adieu on all sides, the travellers drove on as the general gaily observed, with fine colours—"For, to tell you the truth," continued, "in all my various campaigns I have never found any battery so formidable as a woman's tears, and must have did not expect the heroism we have experienced."

CHAPTER IV.  
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ALBERT rejoiced the period of parting was happily over, and in a few minutes turned every thought to the gay visions his active imagination had already portrayed, while Ethelwald, reverting to his recent conversation with Katherine, found a secret pleasure in recalling every word that had passed, and the retrospect confirmed what, till that day, he had scarcely suspected, that he not only loved her, but that a return to those affections was necessary to his future happiness: that he was not altogether indifferent to her, he almost ventured to believe, for, in addition to the tears he had that morning witnessed, memory carried him back to past scenes, in which he could now recollect many little instances of Katherine's artless esteem.—

“Hope told a flattering tale,” and, for the moment, transported with the ecstatic idea, he forgot every passing hour was removing him perhaps for ever from her; nor had the delusion vanished, when the general broke on his reverie, by asking to which of the proposed plans he meant to give his assent?

Ashamed to have been thus absent, and half-vexed at the intrusion on his pleasing reflections, he was obliged to apologize for his inattention to the conversation, by acknowledging his mind had not kept pace with the vehicle that was conveying him from the environs of Beauvoir, but still lingered with the beloved friends he had left in its happy scenes.

“I can easily pardon you, my dear boy,” said the general; “but at the moment I revere the sensibility of your feelings, I almost regret that you possess such, from a conviction they will add little to your happiness in the journey through life. A nice sense of honour is indispensably requisite in the character of a soldier; but

that sense may have too keen an edge, and such, I fear, will be yours. I know your opinion of the world is not formed on the flattering basis Albert has erected to support his: you will perhaps tell me that he has not, like you, been taught to despise its maxims, or educated in a belief that it abounded only with villany and deception, against which even virtue, honour, and integrity, were little safeguard—that his father, unlike yours, at enmity with his fellow-creatures, has drawn a discriminating line between the virtuous and vicious, without condemning all mankind. Granted: but I would have you prove that world, before you join in its condemnation. Endeavour to throw off the prejudices of your youth, and enter it determined to believe it is much better than you have heard it represented, and I will venture to assert you find it so. I do not say you are to go prepared to expect a friend in all who proffer their friendship—I am sorry to add, few terms are so pro-



phaned; but it does not follow you are to suspect a foe in all who address you. Suspicion has, perhaps not unjustly, been styled the mother of security; but I would rather endure the disappointment of discovering a man to be less worthy than I had believed him, than suspect duplicity lurked in any breast with whom I was connected. I allow, and am satisfied, the chevalier De Valmont must have ostensible reasons for the decided hatred he avers to society; for man was not designed to become what he is, and every noble passion he inherits must be subdued by perfidy and ingratitude before he could renounce the blessings offered for his acceptance; neither does it follow that your happiness is to be borne down by the impetuous torrent that has swept away his."


"But is not my dawning sun, sir," said Ethelwald, interrupting him, "tinged with the gloom in which his has set for ever?—What hopes then have I that the atmosphere of futurity will be more bright,

even if emancipated from the doubtful clouds that at present obscure it?"

"I am by no means surprised to hear you argue thus," continued his friend; "and while I regret the noble faculties of your mind should have been thus perverted, I am more zealous in the cause I have undertaken—that of proving to you the errors by which you have been too long biassed. Indeed, I had hoped that monsieur St. Aubin would have, in a great measure, counteracted those prejudices imbibed from the chevalier, and that the tenor of his life must have convinced you that happiness is attainable, even in this sublunary state. True, his knowledge of the world may be considered limited, since his utmost wishes are bounded by the happy family in which he reigns: but it was not always so. He has passed through gayer scenes, known mankind, and bore an active part among them. I also have spent the flower of my days; and though I feel they are closing fast upon me, do not anticipate a joyless winter. The retrospect

of many a day gone past, and the remembrance of valued characters with whom I have associated, will help to cheer the evening of age; and when that is insufficient, I will follow through the paths of glory youthful heroes, who are culling the laurels which spring from those that encircled the brows of warriors who live but in the memory of their country. A few months hence, and the patriot ardour with which a soldier burns will have weaned your mind from the gloomy presentiments that now envelop it; the din of war will chase reflections that can only enervate it; and I shall rejoice to hear that the moralizing Ethelwald De Valmont is lost in the intrepid gallant leader of his troops."


"Whatever my future destination, sir," he replied, "I trust my courage will never admit a doubt; and I should be ungrateful indeed, did I not own myself already more than half a convert to the cause you have pleaded with such friendly eloquence. True, when I have contemplated the chevalier as the victim of a world in which he



was born to shine, I have shrunk from encountering it, under the pressure of a mystery he forbids my penetrating; but I will endeavour henceforth to forget that it really exists, and by so doing, prove I am not altogether unworthy the interest you have taken in my welfare; at least, I will rest satisfied, that while I act worthy the friendship of a monsieur St. Aubin and general Durand, I cannot be debased in the eyes of the world. I will promise to do yet more, and by endeavouring to forget that I am the child of doubt, act on such principles that no future discovery of my origin shall have power to lessen the consequence conscious integrity and unblemished honour have secured me."

"Nobly said!" replied the general, taking his hand; "nor do I doubt your resolution being every way adequate to the task: we will therefore return to the proposed question, which is, if we shall make any part of our tour by water, or continue our route, coasting it along the

Bay of Biscay? For my own part, I prefer the latter; but as I do not mean to put my pleasure in competition with that I wish to procure for you, Albert and yourself shall decide the point."

It was mutually agreed the general's preference should guide their choice; and Albert observed, as nothing could surpass, in his idea, the scenery through which they were now travelling, he saw no inducement they could have to make a change. Their young minds, delighted with the various landscapes that everywhere met their view, were at a loss to express the admiration they felt, while their friend described, with a pleasure nearly amounting to enthusiasm, the more particular beauties of nature, which he remembered, at their age, to have noted with the same animation. The ruggedness of the road, though it frequently impeded their progress, was an inconvenience not regretted, since, in obliging them to leave the carriage, it afforded more opportunity for their observations; and  the stupendous cliffs,

from whose rugged tops the eye wandered over an enchanting prospect, surpassed description, the frequent glens into which the road descended claimed a share of admiration; and though it produced little but a barren rock, or was in places bounded by a wall, whose rude and shapeless form bid defiance to the power of time, the scanty herbage scattered over it, when contrasted with the rich foliage they had surveyed from its more lofty neighbour, could not be unpleasing.

Ethelwald traced, with a degree of rapture, the majestic waves of the Garonne, succeeding each other in their course to join the vast expanse of water that formed the Bay of Biscay; while Albert enjoyed, with an equal degree of pleasure, the simplicity of the goatherd's children, who, forgetful of their rustic employment, stopped to gaze on them, and make their awkward obeisance as they passed, while others climbed the mountains' side, agile as the goats that browsed upon them. Here and there the hut they inhabited, though ex-

pressive of their poverty, added to the picturesque scene, and exemplified to the youthful travellers how little could suffice the wants of man, where luxury had not reared its baneful head, teeming with nameless wants. Here, with nature for their guide, they plodded through life; and if excluded the enjoyments of a more enlightened race, they were also exempt from evils, the result of that refinement.

"Happy beings!" said Ethelwald, internally, "whose wishes, bounded by their native mountains, seek not to explore beyond them, the pursuits of their more elevated, though less happy fellow-creatures."

"If any thing," said the general, "could give a zest to the pleasure of our journey, it would be the society of monsieur St. Aubin: he is, I know, so great an admirer of the works of creation, that those with which we are now surrounded could not fail to be highly gratifying to his taste, while the elegance of his observations would add much to our enjoyment of them; but as it is, I must content myself

with believing neither of you are disappointed in your expectation of what I promised, previous to the commencement of our tour."

"On the contrary, my dear sir," said Albert, "what we have already beheld infinitely surpasses aught the imagination could surmise, however sanguine. If even the white sails of the distant barks, as they glide over the silver bosom of the bay, exhibit a fairy scene exciting admiration, how much is that surpassed by the luxuriant prospect in which the eye at once meets innumerable beauties collected in one view, when the clustering vines and plantations, whose glowing tints arrest the sight, are interspersed with distant towns, a church whose spiral top ascends above its fellow-buildings, or woods whose sombre shades rise in perspective, and in appearance unite with clouds that skim above them!"

As the general was anxious to reach Gascony, he did not propose making



more than requisite delays on the road; they therefore usually rose early, for the advantage of beholding the rising sun shed its first radiance on the lucid drops that decked the half-blown flowers, and travelled till its last rays, retreating behind the western hills, gave place to the silver empress of the night, who, in equal majesty, sailed through heaven's lofty concave, dispensing her refulgent brightness on the peaceful vale, while the shepherd's pipe, stealing on the fragrant air, or the laughing group of happy peasants, dancing beneath its playful beams, served to harmonize the soul in these pastoral scenes.

They sometimes wandered till the mirth had subsided, and the solemn stillness of night reminded them, however reluctant to obey its dictates, that repose was requisite for the support of nature.

On their arrival at Lombez, the general had the satisfaction of finding the chevalier Le Brun, on whose account he so much wished to visit Gascony, in perfect health;

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and was received by him with a warmth of friendship neither time or absence had robbed of its sincerity.

Having introduced his young companions, who were delighted spectators of the interview, and stated the motive of their journey, he said, addressing Ethelwald—"Behold, my dear boy, a farther conviction of my assurance that the world is not destitute of good and worthy characters, since the chevalier Le Brun is still an inhabitant of it. We were boys together; in that early age I revered his many virtues, and through life cherished the love I bore him. Age has silvered our hairs, but has not, you see, had power to steel our hearts against the warm glow that now animates them."

He then acquainted his friend of his intention to remain with him till the expected letters were received from monsieur St. Aubin, which would decide the future arrangements of their time, and added—"As that period will be uncertain, you must assist me in exploring every part

worthy the notice of my fellow-travellers, or gratifying to the taste of those who are not merely in pursuit of those follies with which they could be amply supplied at home. 'Tis now," he continued, "so long since I rambled over our favourite scenes, that all will be new to me, and as novelty possesses so many charms, I am not certain but that it will enable me to climb the mountains with nearly the same activity which Albert and Ethelwald will exhibit on the occasion."

"Time was, my friend," said the chevalier, "when we could boast that alacrity, but I believe we must now content ourselves with resting in the vale, while they ascend the paths we have trod before them, nor murmur at our incapacity to follow, when we recollect our day has not been a short one, or, I trust, misapplied."

"Neither," returned the general, gaily, "is it yet closed, for let me tell you, the twilight shade is often productive of many a cheerful scene, and a winter's evening also possesses some few charms; it is my

intention to spend mine, to the last hour, as happy as I began it."

"At least," replied his friend, "you have lost nothing of the vivacity that in past times made you the life of every circle."

"Surely not," he said, "nor will you wonder at it, when I tell you I am beginning life again in these youths. I am now going to witness their *entrée* to military glory, and must live over my past years to hear their bravery recorded in the annals of their country, and shall then retire satisfied that I have not lived in vain."

"Why, I am not quite satisfied as to that part of the business," returned the *chevalier*. "We have certainly both helped to protect the community of which we are members, and have fought many a battle in defence of it: how far that may exonerate us from having neglected the primary cause of our existence, in making any addition to it, I cannot say."

"Not a word on that subject, my good friend," replied the general, "for if I have

a painful reflection, it arises from not having selected among the fair works of creation a lovely woman, who, like Desdemona, would love me "for the dangers I had past;" and have no other apology to make my amiable countrywomen, than that my youth, spent in the hardships of war, left no leisure for the more fascinating season of love. Once, 'tis true, I thought of enlisting under its banners, but reason whispered, if I desisted from the pursuit of glory till its laurels were fairly won, they would fade ere I attained them, and that, having secured honour, love would welcome my return. I obeyed its dictates, and forgot that return till I felt my ardour subdued—not by love, but by the less pleasing advances of old age; and I fear, were I now to begin the search I should have made some years since, there are few ladies who would choose to support the declining days of an old veteran like myself. However, as you keep me in countenance, I am more reconciled, for I must own the appearance of a madame.

Le Brun, with the addition of some young shoots round your table, would have made me feel rather awkward."

"You are still, I find," said the chevalier, "as good a soldier as usual, for on whatever ground the battle is fought, you always contrive to come off victorious. But I am glad you have warned these young men from following this part of your example; for myself, though no friend to early, which are too often indiscreet, marriages, I am less an advocate for a life of celibacy."

Ethelwald silently coincided with these sentiments, and was, with Albert, highly gratified by the charming spirits of the two friends. It was agreed the party should rise at an early hour on the ensuing day, for the purpose of making a circuit of some miles round Lombez; and with such companions as the chevalier and the general, much pleasure was anticipated in the excursion. Refreshments were prepared to take with them, that no inconvenience might arise from bad accommodation on

the road, or restriction as to the hours of taking it. They travelled slowly, and suffered no scene which afforded aught worthy their observation to pass unnoticed, usually alighting to wander among the romantic beauties of which they were in search; and few excited their admiration more than the pastoral landscapes of Guienne. It was a pleasing contrast to the more awful grandeur they had contemplated in the towering cliffs and mountains, whose stupendous heights were lost in the azure tints that decked their tops, or the rugged rocks, on whose summit a lonely cabin sheltered the sons of labour.

Ethelwald was an enthusiast in the charms of nature: animated by the prospects everywhere presented, he gave imagination the reins, and wandered, regardless of his companions, absorbed in his own reflections; they were such as excluded all but those essentially requisite to complete the happy vision his active mind had portrayed.—“How small a portion of this beautiful spot,” he exclaimed, “with Ka-

therine St. Aubin, would suffice my wants! Here, in the sweet offices of reciprocal love, we might hail the rosy morn, and watch the setting sun, while, like the happy tenants of these peaceful vales, unambitious of grants bestowed by royal donors, we could secure the more substantial blessings of contentment, live the life of reason, and prove to our unassuming neighbours, "it is the only life to live."

A mournful presage crossed his mind, and would have instigated him to believe that such a destiny was forbidden him; but he had promised to divest himself of that propensity to despondence inculcated from the chevalier De Valmont, and which the romantic ardour of his constitution had nourished till it became habitual: still his mind was firm, and his resolution, once formed, not easily shaken; regardless, therefore, of the unwelcome intrusion, he pictured in imagination the succeeding events of a few years, in which having acquitted himself with honour, and obtained



the reward of his services, he might return to Beauvoir, and claim from the hands of monsieur St. Aubin his lovely daughter ; for every idea that the blessing he anticipated in the possession of Katherine's affection might ere that be destined for another, was rejected as an infringement on his new system. He was already in imagination the envied possessor of a small estate he had been some time intent surveying, on the declivity of a hill upon whose summit he had seated himself, and down whose sloping sides, rich with herbage, innumerable flocks were seen to graze. Neither art or nature had left an addition that could add improvement to what he contemplated ; and while he wandered in idea through its enchanting scenery, pointing out the various beauties to Katherine, as she fondly hung on his arm, and shared the pleasure, his eye caught at a still greater distance the spiral smoke, as it issued from a white chimney embosomed in the dark foliage of a small wood, while the building to which it be-

longed was imperfectly seen through the branches of waving pines with which it was surrounded. Its apparent seclusion, from the height on which he stood (for actuated by a curiosity irresistible, he had quitted his seat, the better to discern its real situation), reminded him of the chateau in which his early days had passed, and with a sigh he wondered if its possessor was equally unhappy. For some time he meditated to discover by which road it was possible to gain a nearer access to it, and was descending the hill for the purpose of exploring one which promised some connexion with the object of his pursuit, when the voice of Albert, loudly repeating his name, obliged him to stop, and, on looking round, he beheld his friend with the muleteer, who was also their guide, coming evidently in search of him, and judging this fellow might be enabled to give him some information, he hastened to meet them.

Albert told him the general's apprehensions for his safety had obliged him to un-

dertake a search that he began to think would be fruitless, when Jerome first discovered him on the brow of the hill.

"And which," said Ethelwald, "I was going imprudently to descend, without remembering how much it would have retarded my return to the friends I had left, a rudeness for which you must help me to apologize. Indeed, my wish of procuring an accurate view of a mansion I discovered from these heights had rendered me unmindful that a return was necessary."

"And had you persisted in gaining it," returned his friend, "'tis probable you might have found the returning at all attended with some difficulty, unless you were better acquainted with these parts: but what is there so particularly interesting in the building you speak of?"

"Only that its sequestered appearance reminded me so forcibly of that in which I was reared, that I should like to see more of it: 'tis probable Jerome can tell to whom it belongs?"

Having pointed it out to their observation, Jerome said—"That, your honour, is but the back of the building, which you see almost buried in the wood; 'tis in front the most beautiful spot in all Gascony, and was once inhabited by the happiest family; but they are all gone," he added, "and it is now in a pitiable state."

Ethelwald, interested by this recital, asked if he meant they were all dead, or removed only to another part?

"Why that, your honour, is, I believe, hardly known," he replied; "they disappeared very strangely, and have never been heard of since."

"But there are certainly inhabitants in it now, by the smoke that ascends through those trees?"

"Yes," said Jerome, "there are two old servants, who lived there in happier times, and have still the care of the villa: they occupy but a very small part of it, and the rest is close shut up, to the astonishment of all travellers, that such a place should be so left to ruin."

“ But these servants,” returned Ethelwald, “ must know what is become of the family, who, of course, support them ?”

“ I can’t tell how that is, your honour ; but if they are in the secret they keep it to themselves, for neither the count or his lady have been heard of for some years, to the great loss of the neighbouring poor, who worship, even now, their memory.”

“ Jerome’s account has made me more than ever anxious,” said Ethelwald, “ to accomplish my first design of obtaining a nearer view of the villa.”

“ We will mention the circumstance on our return,” replied his friend, “ and ’tis probable the chevalier can give us farther information, for I must own my curiosity is somewhat awakened by the mysterious tale.”

The general having rallied Ethelwald on his desertion, asked if he had reconnoitred any part sufficiently interesting to offer an inducement for their exploring it also ?

“ In answer, he related what they had gathered from Jerome, with his own obser-

vations, and inquired if the chevalier Le Brun could add to the information they had received.

He smiled at his energy, which he attributed to the ardour of youth, and said —“ I regret it is not in my power to give you the particulars of a tale, there is, I nevertheless believe, attached to the villa, for it was, when I first returned to Gascony, as now, uninhabited ; but I was given to understand some domestic calamity befell the possessors of it, and obliged them to quit a residence which must once have been a desirable one, since it still retains many beauties. It belonged to a count De Vennuiel ; but whether he is dead, or existing in some remote part of the world, I am not sufficiently informed to acquaint you. The lower class of people relate strange tales, and, as is usual on such occasions, attach something marvellous, which they are as fond of circulating as the world in general of attending to ; hence the Villa Le Blanc is said to be the abode of some

supernatural agent, who would tell of foul deeds that have profaned its walls: for myself, I ever discredit such idle reports, and the more so, as the old domestics, who have resided there for some years, live undisturbed by the visionary alarms that are said to molest the midnight traveller, when he passes the neighbourhood."

Ethelwald lost not a word of the chevalier's account, and again expressed a wish of visiting the villa.

"That, my young friend, may be easily done, as far as relates to an external inspection, for I believe there is no difficulty in gaining access to the grounds, which are nearly reduced by neglect to their original state of nature. By a trivial alteration in our projected route, we can pass the estate, which will in part afford you an opportunity of satisfying the curiosity Jerome has so forcibly excited—a promise which the circuit of a few miles on the following morning completed; and such was the interest each had taken in what they had heard, that when they entered

what must once have been a beautiful avenue leading to the house, a sort of melancholy gloom imperceptibly stole on the mind of each. Its path was now obstructed by the long grass, which grew in wild disorder, and rendered walking difficult, while the lofty trees that stood on either side, unchecked by the woodman's care, extended their gigantic branches, and formed above so close an union with each other, that the cheering sun could no longer penetrate its thick foliage, or disperse the gloom that reigned throughout it; while the heavy dewdrops, trembling on each leaf and blade of grass, were, to the feeling mind, emblematic of nature's tears for the devastations that surrounded her.

The avenue terminated in an extensive lawn, on whose scite the villa presented itself, a mournful memento of fallen greatness. Its windows, that commanded in every direction varied prospects, among which the fertile plains of Guienne, and the distant view of the Garonne, shone conspicuous, were now closed on the ro-



mantic scenery, and an air of desolation shaded the whole.

Ethelwald's curiosity was still unsatisfied: he had now a view of the building and had wandered through most of the grounds attached to it, but the hope that flattered him he should also see the domestics who were its solitary inhabitant was still unrealized; neither could he account for the resistless impulse that prompted the wish he felt to see them. They had endeavoured to enter a small copse, through which he had first beheld the object he was now so interested in, but the growth of many years had rendered its walks nearly impenetrable, and the chevalier observing they had now, he believed, inspected all that his interest could procure them admission to, which was only that common to every traveller proposed their regaining the road they had left—"unless," he continued, "Ethelwald and Albert have an inclination to try the now inhospitable doors, which are, I believe, inaccessible."

Ethelwald, pleased with the proposal, entreated Albert would accompany him to make the experiment, and added—"I have certainly a very great desire to discover if the present residents exhibit equal vestiges of the ravage time has made in what, as Jerome observed, must once have infinitely surpassed every neighbouring villa."

Albert agreed, and leaving the general and chevalier Le Brun, who smiled at the eagerness they expressed, beneath the shade of an ancient oak, they crossed a courtyard, and having noticed a small window, through which the gleam of a fire was visible, knocked at a door, evidently nearest to the only part that appeared inhabited, and stood a moment in silent expectation of the result. Their first signal remaining unanswered, Albert ventured to repeat it, and the door was shortly after slowly opened by the feeble hands of age, personified in a tall venerable figure, whose dress plainly indicated

he was the domestic of whom they had heard.

He bowed respectfully, but rather abruptly demanded their business.

"We are travellers, my good friend," returned Ethelwald, "who are brought hither by two motives: curiosity first induced us to leave our road, to wander in these extensive grounds; and as two of our companions are, in consequence of their more advanced years, somewhat fatigued, we would intrude on your hospitality, to allow us admission for a short time to give them rest."

"You have made a request, young gentleman, I am hardly at liberty to comply with," he replied, "for these doors are never opened to satisfy vain curiosity; however, if your friends will enter my humble apartment for a few minutes, they shall be welcome."

This was the desired point, and Albert returned to impart the success of their scheme, while Ethelwald remained with

the old man, whose eyes were instantly fixed on him, as he supposed to discover if he had assigned a true motive for his intrusion, for such he felt it was. Though he rejoiced in his stratagem, his host still continued to hold the door in his hand, as if tenacious of admitting him till he had seen the rest of the expected party, and a momentary silence was at length interrupted by his asking if they travelled south?

Ethelwald replied, no, their route lay towards Vienna, but that a desire of seeing Gascony had brought them to that part.

"You are then strangers?" he replied: "but you are French, monsieur?"

"Yes," said Ethelwald, "and one of our party is also an inhabitant of Gascony, though he resides many miles from hence."

They were by this time in sight, and the old domestic appeared to scrutinize them as they approached. When they reached the door, the general with his

usual ease said—"I am fearful, my friend, we shall be considered intruders; nevertheless, be assured, I am much obliged by a kindness that shall not go unacknowledged."

"I ask none," he replied, with a calm indifference, "and the only return you can make for the accommodation I have to offer is never to notice your having passed these doors, for the villa is not kept for the inspection of travellers: but you are standing," he added, and then led the way through a lofty passage, that terminated in a small room, whose lattice was nearly obscured by the woodbine that crept over it.

Delighted with the air of neatness that reigned in the apartment, the chevalier said—"You have at least appropriated some part in this beautiful ruin to comfort and convenience."

"'Tis a small part, monsieur," he replied, "but suffices for those left to enjoy it."

Fearful of his suspecting that theirs was

merely a visit of inquiry, the chevalier appeared not to notice the answer, and the general, looking through the casement, said—"Such a spot as this might almost reconcile one to a seclusion from the world. Observe, Ethelwald," he continued, "an object, that through my glass I discern as a kind of battlement or tower, on which the sun-rays have a pleasing effect; its direction must be somewhere on the bank of the Garonne. Perhaps our kind host can tell us what it is?"

"That," said the old man, with a half-suppressed sigh, "is the ancient seat of an honourable family, whom misfortunes unprecedented has swept away; for in this life even the good are not exempt from evil."

"True," said the chevalier, "and your retirement affords ample leisure for your contemplation on the various changes in this transitory state."

"My years," he returned, "have afforded me too many subjects for them, and I am now turning my thoughts to a

world in which I expect to see those rewarded whom Providence has in its wisdom thought fit to chastise in this. But your question, monsieur, has made me unmindful that I was going to offer the only repast I can set before you, which is a little fruit."

"Indeed it is the only one of which we could partake," said the general, "nor would we trespass on you for that, since we are equally obliged by the kindness of your intention."

"We have fruit in abundance," he replied, "therefore 'tis no trespass;" saying which, he produced from a small closet a basket of various kinds, and placed before them, with part of a flask of wine, which they could no longer refuse to partake of.

During the repast, they asked several questions relative to that part of the country, to all of which their host returned satisfactory answers. At length the chevalier ventured to say—"Travellers might almost be exonerated from the charge of

impertinence, in asking why ~~this~~ charming place is left solely to the destroying hand of time, because such a question must naturally arise in beholding it: but as I ever respect the private sorrows of every individual, and am given to understand such were the noble possessors of this mansion, I forbear to make the inquiry; but you will pardon my asking if you constantly reside here alone?"

"Not quite," he replied; "my solitude is shared by a fellow-servant, who is, at present, visiting a sick family in the neighbouring vale. She is, like myself, in years, and the retirement in which we live suits us well. Beatrice has also a niece, who visits us occasionally, but she is the only guest we admit, or indeed ever have, for I believe superstition has rendered our neighbours shy of us; and 'tis as well," he continued, "for at our time of life we have nothing to do in ~~this~~ world but to prepare for that which is to come, since we cannot recall those who



made it desirable, and gladdened our existence in it."

"You have then survived your lord?" said the chevalier.

"The count De Vennuiel is no more," he replied, with visible emotion.

The general observed it, and changed the subject. In the course of their conversation, Ethelwald had, more than once, caught the old man's eyes intently fixed on himself while speaking, and at last addressing the chevalier Le Brun, he said—"Are these young gentlemen brothers, monsieur?"

The chevalier answered they were not, neither did they bear any affinity to each other, but were intimate friends.

Ethelwald thought he looked disappointed, and wished to ask more, but from a fear of being deemed impertinent; he therefore said, by way of renewing the subject—"Which of these gentlemen, in that case, should you have taken for our father?"

The old man, looking at the general, and then at Albert, replied—"There is a family likeness there, but I——Pshaw!" he continued, "how weak I am, when I know it is impossible!—You will pardon me, monsieur," he added, observing the general looking attentively at him: "that face," pointing to Ethelwald, "reminds me so forcibly of a family who are all gone, that it has made me even guilty of a weakness, for though I know they have left no male descendant, I persuaded myself I could not possibly be deceived in the features."

"Is it altogether impossible," said the general, "that you may have seen him before? Have you been many years in this part of the world?"

Looking mournfully, he replied—"Of the thirty years I have been an inhabitant of this house, eighteen have been too solitary to admit of its being probable, for he tells me you are strangers in Gascony."

"We are," returned the general, "the chevalier Le Brun excepted, and he has

resided some miles from hence a short period only. This youth, who interested you so much, is the son of a chevalier De Valmont, if that will satisfy your surmises as to the family likeness you trace."

"No," he replied, "I know nothing of that name, nor is it possible he should belong to them, for they are all dead."

While he spoke, a knock at the door announced another visitor, and rising to open it, he said—"It is only the companion of my solitude; I will return in a few minutes."

When he had left the room, the chevalier remarked, they must remember they were not to expect beds at the Villa Le Blanc, though they had obtained admission.—"Your curiosity now, Ethelwald, has surely nothing more to seek?" he added.

Ethelwald smiled at the reproof, but his thoughts were differently employed, till the approaching footsteps of the old steward roused him from his reverie, and he entered the apartment, followed by a

woman whose age appeared to correspond with his own.—“ These gentlemen will excuse your sitting down, Beatrice,” he said, “ seeing that your walk has fatigued you.”

“ We are going, my friend,” returned the general; “ therefore I beg may not prevent your companion’s remembering this is your dwelling, and we intruders, only we shall speak of your kindness when far away; and now suffer me to make this trifling return for the refreshment you have afforded us.”

“ By no means,” he returned, and a momentary displeasure crossed his features; “ Cleon’s life has passed in the service of too good a master to render rewards requisite. My few remaining years,” he added, “ are amply provided for, and were they less so, my soul is not sufficiently sordid to admit of my accepting your generous offer.”

“ You have a noble soul,” replied the general, “ and I should like to be better acquainted with you; but ’tis too probable

we shall never meet again; however, we leave you our good wishes, and must acknowledge ourselves debtors, since you will not allow me to cancel the obligation;" saying which, he shook him heartily by the hand.

He returned the pressure, and said it was long since his residence had been honoured by such a party, but continued—"You have also my sincere wishes for your safe journey." He then took the offered hands of the chevalier, Albert, and Ethelwald, which he pressed alternately, and in relinquishing the latter, said—"Adieu, monsieur, and take with you an old man's prayers that your future destiny may be less unfortunate than those you so much resemble!"

Ethelwald thanked him, and quitted the villa, with a reluctance for which he could not account. The venerable Cleon accompanied them through the courtyard, and having once more pronounced his farewell, slowly returned to the house.

In passing an angle of the building,

Ethelwald involuntarily looked up to it, and his eye rested on a turret, over which the ivy grew luxuriantly. It was not, like the rest, closed by a shutter, and he was going to observe, from the situation, it must command a fine prospect of the Garonne, when something passed quickly across it within the room, and he persuaded himself it was the figure of a woman habited in black. The impression was so forcible that he stopped in expectation of seeing it return, when Albert caught his arm, and inquired if he was unwell, but no sooner heard what had detained him than he joined the chevalier and the general in the laugh against him. —“ Ethelwald,” said the latter, “ has certainly caught the infection which prevails among the peasantry, and is actually become superstitious.”

Vexed that he had named his own observations, he replied.—“ It may be so, for I own I am so deeply interested in what I have heard of the count De Vennuiel, that I plead guilty to your charge ; but ’tis

probable the figure I beheld might be the niece of whom Cleon spoke, as belonging to the housekeeper."

"If so," said the chevalier, "she is a lass of some courage, to venture alone to such a remote part of the villa at this time of the evening, when the neighbours testify such tales of wonder relative to it. I rather think Ethelwald's eyes were assisted by the strength of imagination in the present instance, and that, if any thing passed the window, it was some of the winged tenants of the thick foliage that surrounds it, hastening to their lonely covert for the night. We are, however, indebted to his ingenuity for having gained access to the villa, as well as for the hospitable treatment of a worthy old fellow, who has, I will venture to say, been a faithful steward."

"From what he said," returned the chevalier, "the count is really dead: in that case, 'tis still more strange the estate is not disposed of, for I never heard of any younger branches to the family, and Cleon

was little disposed to be communicative; therefore I checked the inquiry I should have otherwise made. As it is, we chatted away so much time that we shall scarcely reach Leitoure to obtain accommodation for the night."

Ethelwald rejoiced when, having done so, he was at liberty to seek the room appropriated to himself and Albert, and more so when his friend, resigning himself to the powerful influence of Morpheus, left him undisturbed to the full enjoyment of reflections calculated to banish sleep. There was, in the abridged statement he had collected of the count De Vennuiel, a coincidence of events that led him imperceptibly to connect them with the chevalier De Valmont, and the inferences he drew from each were such as created varied emotions. He had been always taught to believe perfidy and ingratitude had forced his father from the haunts of men: domestic calamity had caused the count, in a mysterious manner, to leave a place in which he had once been happy,



and where the prayers of the poor proved the extent of his benevolence. Could it be possible the chevalier De Valmont and the count De Vennuiel were the same?—Reason forbade the suggestion, for Jerome asserted neither the count or his lady had been since heard of. The chevalier De Valmont had no lady, Jerome spoke of no children, and the chevalier Le Brun knew of no younger branches in the family. Again, would not Cleon have recognized him? True, he was, he said, familiar with his likeness, but he also had declared the impossibility of his belonging to the family he alluded to, for they were all dead: he had even averred, that the count De Vennuiel was no more, therefore the emotion he felt, the lively interest he took in all that concerned the Villa Le Blanc, had originated from the suggestions of his own ideas, and the conviction that had since proved its possessor was, like the chevalier, a man of sorrows; as such, entitled to the commiseration he felt so sincerely disposed to bestow at any

rate. He found there were other mysterious characters, for such a one he believed the count; neither could he satisfy himself, though he yielded to the raillery of his friends, that what he had seen in the turret was an external object. The past events of his life had naturally tinged his mind with a melancholy that tended to superstition, and a subject like the present, in defiance of reason, was food for it. Indeed, could he have accomplished the design, he had willingly retraced the road, for an opportunity of again placing himself near the window which had so interested his curiosity; but the attempt was vain, and he reluctantly remembered he must leave the country without again beholding it, for they were then some miles on the road to Lombez.

The morning dawned, and found his opinion yet wavering, save in one point, which was carefully to conceal in his own breast those observations which still kept him irresolute as to rejecting his first belief that the count's fate bore some analo-

gy to the chevalier's—a belief strengthened by a recollection of the agitation he had himself witnessed in the latter, when he named general Durand's intention of passing through Gascony.

Having, therefore, carefully noted this and many other circumstances which memory reverted to, he endeavoured to procure some repose, lest he should again subject himself to the remarks of Albert, which he knew would not be spared if he suspected in what manner he had passed the night.

The general had predetermined they should pursue their journey no farther in that direction, but return to Lombez, lest letters had arrived during their short absence which must determine their future proceedings; and his caution was justified, for on their arrival at the chevalier Le Brun's, a packet was delivered him, whose purport precluded all possibility of a projected tour to the Pyrenees, which was to have been made, but for the reception of it.

The rapture with which Ethelwald and Albert received a confirmation of all their hopes, when the general presented each a commission, for a few minutes excluded the regret arising from an intimation that they were not to serve in the same regiment, and still farther, that almost an immediate separation was to take place, since Albert's orders were to proceed without further delay to the capital, while Ethelwald was to join his company in Schweidnitz, where his regiment then lay.

Even the general shared the chagrin this intelligence conveyed, for he had indulged a secret pleasure from the expectation of presenting both to his august sovereign; but the spark of martial fire that lights a soldier's breast was not extinct in his, and with an animated smile he said — "My heart, Ethelwald, will follow you to the seat of war, for in it I have spent my dearest hours. How gladly would I lead you to the tented field, and see you encircled by the warriors with whom I

have served !—But it must not be—the duty I owe my royal master demands an interview with him ; I must therefore accompany Albert, but shall prepare letters, which, on your presenting, will not fail to procure for you the same respect my personal introduction would have done.”

Ethelwald bowed his thanks, but his feelings were too great for utterance. The period was now arrived in which, divested of every guide, he was to be left to the direction of his own judgment. Even the councils of friendship were denied him, for Albert would be far away, and strangers who knew him not must supply his place—strangers uninterested for him, and with whom he could never converse of the beloved inhabitants of Beauvoir : but this was despondence, and he shook the baneful influence from his mind, resolving in future to resist even the shadow of its approach ; and the effort was crowned with success, while the delighted general beheld the growing ardour that exhilarated his spirits, and led him to believe he had in

part conquered the habitual weakness he once feared had sapped the foundation of a noble mind. He now hoped every thing, and therefore omitted no opportunity of strengthening the cause, by inspiring him with emulation, and pointing out every suggestion that could assist or render him adequate to the new task he had to perform.

In the discipline of war, general Durand was a proficient—in military tactics, not less able; and, in short, the pupils of so great a soldier could not fail to inherit the sentiments which he so carefully instilled, and which were calculated to make them all that he had been. A longer delay in Gascony was incompatible with their orders; therefore, having parted with the chevalier Le Brun, they lost no time in pursuing their journey, and in no place regretted the haste in which they were obliged to travel so much as in passing through Switzerland.

“I have,” said the general, “I believe,

in my various roams seen all that can interest a traveller in this part of the world, and your admiration has been considerably excited by the observations our limited time enabled you to make; but all that either yourself or I have witnessed is surpassed by a scene I will present you with in this country."

At a loss to surmise what they were to expect, having already expressed their pleasing surprise in beholding the Glaciers, over whose shelving rocks the crystal torrent dashed its ceaseless stream with resistless force, while its white foam vied with the silver snow that crested the tops of the neighbouring mountains, Albert inquired if the treat he promised was the production of art or nature? "for shall I own," he continued, "I am not prepared to suppose the present magnificence of scenery can be exceeded."

"So I once thought," replied the general, "but if you will leave your beds when I summon you to-morrow morning, we will ascend one of these famous moun-

tains, to behold glories little short of divinity itself, to have an idea of which you must be a witness, for only travellers who have seen the sun rise in Switzerland can give an adequate description of its resplendent beauties."

Eager to embrace the opportunity of so doing, they were waiting the promised signal from general Durand, and having reached the spot he had specified, they were, as he expected, lost in amazement. Aurora had claimed her parting kiss from Tithonus, and mounting her blazing chariot, her impatient steeds, eager to begin their daily circuit, darted through the ethereal space, while the sombre veil of night, furlled by celestial beings, revealed an azure atmosphere; through whose cloudless space the heavenly messenger winged her rapid flight, proclaiming as she went the new-born day; Nature welcomed the glorious herald, and all creation owned its power.

Ethelwald and Albert caught the in-



spiration, and, incapable of expressing what they felt, in silence adored the work, but more the hand which formed it thus. The latter owned himself a convert to the general's opinion, that nothing could surpass a view of the sun rising on these mountains; and added—"We can now have no inducement to delay our speed, since every other object must be uninteresting on a comparison with this."

The general agreed that it must diminish their importance, yet assured him there was still much to admire, and which could not fail to excite admiration, had they time to explore it; but his desire punctually to obey the orders they had received determined him to use the utmost dispatch: still an anxiety prevailed in his mind, relative to Ethelwald pursuing his journey into Silesia alone and unattended. He had often ruminated upon it, and at length resolved, when they reached Lintz, at which place the separation must take place, that his own servant should accom-

pany him through Bohemia, and having seen him in safety to Schweidnitz, return to him at Vienna.

Ethelwald rejoiced in the arrangement, and accepted the proposal with gratitude, acknowledging that it would mitigate the parting in a strange country. At Lintz, therefore, he bade adieu to his beloved Albert, and the no-less-revered general, from whom he received an affectionate assurance that no time could lessen the warm interest he felt in his welfare, and that though the chance of war had forbidden his leading him to his sovereign, he should not fail to interest him in his cause, by explaining what he thought necessary as to his name and connexions;—"And now," he continued, "my dear boy, once more let me remind you, though I think it needless, that you wear a sword which is to protect the country for which you fight; never, then, draw it unauthorised by the dictates of honour, and, above all, self-conviction that it is in a just cause. Be assured, that the honour which would

point it to the breast of a fellow-creature, from the impulse of passion or a supposed injury, the result of a petulant moment or inebriety, is falsely styled so, and is, I aver, derogatory to the character of a soldier. To evade the danger of encountering this insidious representation of honour, let reason keep unwearied vigils over every passion, while you, with equal caution, prove yourself a faithful guardian of the weapon you are sanctioned to use as a valued friend, not as a glittering toy."

Ethelwald could only say—"Be assured, my dear sir, that I will strive to be all that you would have me; and should I fail, it shall not be from inattention to your kind admonitions, that are too deeply engraven on my mind to be easily eradicated." He then pressed his hand with fervour to his lips, and having once more reminded Albert that he should rely on finding him a punctual correspondent, since letters must now be their only intercourse, waved his hand, and hastened from them to conceal emotions that he

wished not to betray. His every thought was now turned to the new companions that he was hastening to join, and he secretly wished that destiny might place him under the command of such a man as general Durand.

For some miles his mind was too much occupied to allow of his making any observations on the country through which he passed. At length, wearied of his own reflections, he inquired of Eustace, the servant who attended him, how long the general was stationed at Schweidnitz when last there with his troops, and if he was at that time with him?

"My master was there a very few months, please your honour, and it was at Schweidnitz that I was taken into his service, almost immediately on his arrival, for I am a native of Silesia."

"Were you in the army?" returned Ethelwald.

Eustace answered he was not—"Though my inclination powerfully led me to it,

your honour," he added, " my old father strongly opposed it, and as he had been a good father to me, I promised not to enlist; but he had a very large family, and I knew I must provide for myself, therefore looked out for a master, and good fortune brought the general into our neighbourhood. I thought myself very happy in getting into his service, and have now been with him fourteen years, during which time I have never seen my family; but they hear from me, and know I am very happy, for I cannot be otherwise with so good a master; and now, your honour, I shall pop on them unawares, for they little think I am so near them."

Ethelwald recollected the pleasure he had expressed when first informed he was to accompany him into Silesia, as also the general saying—" When you have attended monsieur De Valmont to Schweidnitz, and he has no farther occasion for you, the time will be your own." And now he found he had permission to remain with his family a fortnight after himself had

dismissed him, he felt infinite pleasure from witnessing the poor fellow's joy at the idea of returning so unexpectedly to his home, and determined not to detain him one day longer than was absolutely necessary.

This he communicated to him, adding — "I shall think myself very fortunate, Eustace, if I can meet with a servant disposed to remain as long in my service as you have done in yours, for I have the greatest veneration for old and faithful domestics."

"There is a brother of mine," replied Eustace, "who would, I am sure, be proud to serve your honour, if he is not already engaged, and when I last heard from him he was in want of a place: he is many years younger than myself, and was once rather unsettled, and gave his poor father much uneasiness, but he has seen his folly, and is now, I am told, a very good lad."

Ethelwald would have been as well pleased, if part of this information had

been omitted, but as he considered it a proof of sincerity in Eustace, and knew his worth, he felt inclined to hope the brother might prove a valuable servant, notwithstanding he had once been less steady, and promised, if he was still out of service, to take him, on his recommendation, in preference to a stranger.

## CHAPTER V.

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ON Ethelwald's arrival at Schweidnitz, he hastened to pay his respects to the commanding-officer, by whom he was received with flattering marks of attention, and introduced, with the same easy politeness, to his brother officers, each of whom pressed forward, with friendly eagerness, to welcome him among them, and the more so when the general, to whom he had given his letter of introduction, said—"I have the honour, gentlemen, of presenting

you, in monsieur De Valmont, a young and favourite friend of general Durand's—in-  
telligence which cannot fail to insure his  
welcome, were we less inclined to accept  
the passport which I must acknowledge  
his own appearance carries to my favour."

Ethelwald bowed his thanks for a com-  
pliment that somewhat embarrassed him ;  
and extended his hand in turn to the  
proffered ones of the party by whom he  
was surrounded, as a token of approbation  
on all sides.

" You have not found us idle on your  
arrival, I assure you," said the general,  
" and are come among us in time to share  
the laurels we expect shortly to gather, by  
nobly defeating the proud menaces of the  
exulting Frederick. New reinforcements  
are pouring in daily, while we are employ-  
ed in putting every thing in a state of de-  
fence, so requisite for the protection and  
preservation of the place, which is in  
danger of being besieged by a powerful  
enemy."

Ethelwald said, when he entered the



army, it was with a wish of becoming a soldier, therefore did not regret the probability of his first step leading through the school of experience.

“ Nobly said !” replied a veteran officer, who stood near him ; “ that was a sentiment worthy the lips of an older soldier, and too pure not to be genuine.”

Ethelwald was then conducted to witness the preparations making, and found, as they had said, every one busily employed—some in repairing the fallen slopes of the ramparts and parapets, which time had decayed, while others were as expeditiously erecting new works, to strengthen their powers of resistance in the expected siege.

Animated by the exertions he everywhere beheld, he entered with avidity into the cause he had espoused ; and while he attended, and heard the orders issued to men and officers, forgot every thing but the present scene. The resolution he had formed, never to become an idle spectator, where his powers could be called into action, now predominated, and by the unre-

mitting attention he paid to all that passed, he was very soon enabled to take an active share in the works carrying on—so much so, that general Daun, who had the command during the siege, shortly after his arrival appointed him assisting engineer, and frequently expressed, in high terms, his approbation of the indefatigable zeal Ethelwald, on every occasion, exhibited; but notwithstanding the exertion of many able officers, aided by firm and disciplined troops, they ~~had~~ scarcely completed their task, and effected the defence requisite to resist the meditated attack, when the investment commenced.

When Ethelwald had been two days at Schweidnitz, he gave Eustace permission to make the best of his time by setting off instantly to the village of which his father was an inhabitant; and on the evening of the next he returned with his brother, anxious to obtain his promise of taking him on trial, having found him still unprovided for.

Eustace had said every thing his bro-

therly affection authorised, to influence Ethelwald in his favour; but there was still a something in the appearance of Sebastian which he disliked: yet, unable to assign a cause for it, and endeavouring to believe he would improve on a farther knowledge, he engaged him, from a conviction that to have rejected him, without a motive for so doing, would not only appear illiberal, but capricious also; and Eustace, after giving him such advice as he deemed requisite for his future conduct, departed, happy in having provided him with such a master, and taking letters, both to general Durand and Albert, from Ethelwald.

Sebastian was returning to his master's quarters, with the result of a message he had been to deliver, when the rumour first reached him that the enemy was now advancing in every direction; and a few hours confirmed the supposition that they intended to station their troops in a manner that might enable them to close upon the town in every quarter they deemed expe-

dient; and even then, though kept at a distance, they had completely blockaded the place; all resources were, therefore, cut off from the inhabitants.

In a short time the enemy was observed to open their trenches; and from their vigilance and great exertions, such was the progress made, that no time was to be lost on the part of the besieged, who instantly commenced a heavy fire on them from the garrison, which was returned with equal spirit from the mortar batteries of the besiegers, so judiciously placed as to have a great effect on the former, even to dislodging several of their guns. But the spirit of the Austrians equalled the duty they had to perform; and a short time not only enabled them to repair the injury they had sustained, but also to annoy the enemy in turn, by a work they had raised with much expedition, and which, from its position, could not fail of doing great execution in the trenches of the besiegers. But this was a short-lived triumph, for it was soon discovered they had not only repaired the

damages received, but gained so fast upon them as to render a retreat into the town absolutely requisite; in doing which, it was expedient to destroy their own works, lest they should prove any way advantageous to the enemy, who still followed so close, that general Daun came to a resolution of making a sally in the night, to surprise their trenches, the command of which was given to an officer on whose abilities he could rely.

Ethelwald was among those who volunteered for this enterprise; and the energy with which he pressed his cause induced the captain who was to lead them to second his request; and he had the satisfaction of joining the party, which, regulated by such a judicious commander, could not fail of success.

The hour of midnight was named for the undertaking, and the chosen number ordered to hold themselves in readiness for an attempt, from which much was expected.

Ethelwald's intrepidity was unmarked

by the rashness which too often misleads the young and inexperienced soldier; for though he anticipated the event with the expectation of success that buoyed his companions, he was nevertheless aware it was not divested of danger, which they must share as well as those for whom it was intended.

Albert, previous to ~~their~~ separation, had proposed a sort of journal being carried on by each, which, as opportunity occurred, was to be exchanged in letters; and Ethelwald, during his short residence in Schweidnitz, had carefully attended to his.

It yet wanted two hours of that in which the sally was to take place, and he retired to his quarters to devote a part of the time to his friend; the occupation naturally led his mind from Albert to Beauvoir, and for a moment he contrasted its peaceful scenes, and calm retirement, to those in which he then moved. The former, he remembered, were lately dear to him, and even now that he was far distant, memory dwelt with pleasure on the

retrospect—"But yet," he exclaimed, with the smile of exultation, "I feel that I was not born to exist in sequestered solitude; my animated soul beats with new life, and convinces me I have followed its dearest dictates in my present pursuit. Loved and respected De Valmont!" he continued, "good and generous Durand!—how am I bound to respect and bless your united efforts, for making me what I am—for the sentiments you have instilled—for the nice distinction of honour you have inculcated—and for the knowledge you have taught me! When I forget what I owe to your goodness, or become unmindful of it, may my ingratitude be my scourge!—But should the chance of war cut short an existence made valuable to me by that goodness, may the celestial agent that waits for my fleeting spirit in the hour of death whisper an assurance that Ethelwald exulted in the cause for which he fell, and in his last sigh breathed a prayer for both!"

A solemn stillness reigned through the garrison, and as he marked the movements

of his watch, not a sound broke on his ear but that of the sentinel passing the accustomed signal, which was echoed by his fellows on guard, and which, as it ran to the more distant posts, assumed a cadence that the surrounding darkness and expected attempt rendered awful.

He had carefully locked up his papers, preparatory to joining his brother-officers; and as he reached his sash, which lay on the table, a remembrance of the hand that wrought it forcibly occurred; and he believed, could Katherine at that moment be sensible of the purpose for which he was putting it on, her gentle nature would feel kindly interested in his success. It might even force an impearled tear from the confines of the dark lashes he had so often, as a boy, admired—"Let this idea then," he said, "exhilarate me, and prove that I am not unworthy the precious tribute!—Yes, Katherine," he continued, "with such a powerful incitement, can I be otherwise than successful?—this pledge



of your esteem shall be the guardian of my honour—shall make me sanguine, and witness that my undaunted soul evades no danger consistent with my duty, feels no sentiment for which I may hereafter blush.”

He then hastened to the expecting party, who were waiting his arrival. The greatest regularity was observed, and the impatience the men expressed for the enterprise judiciously checked by the superior knowledge of their commanders. The hour at length struck, and the sally-port through which they were to pass was silently thrown open.

Expectation sat on every countenance, and the prayers of those left in the garrison followed them for success. It exceeded all they had hoped, having penetrated far into the trenches, and done considerable damage to the works of the enemy, before their approach was even suspected; and such was their perseverance, aided by the consternation this unexpected manoeuvre had occasioned, that for some time

they were enabled to continue a destruction that threatened a severe check to the farther progress of the Prussians.

Having effected their design, and regained the garrison in triumph, the next step was to repair their own works, which necessity, as before related, had compelled them to destroy, during which the assailants were also as busily employed: but notwithstanding their amazing activity, such was the damage they had sustained, that many days were requisite for the completion of their task; and by the time every thing was in readiness to renew the attack, the Austrians were equally prepared to meet their advances. But fortune still favoured the enemy; and though nothing could exceed the bravery of men and officers, they were again obliged to yield the superiority, and retreat to the town, for the destruction of which, it was now observed, they were preparing mines in different directions; to counteract which, general Daun proposed once more, by the

assistance of small mines, to defeat the intention by destroying their means, an attempt which was followed by their former success. The enemy was again thrown into confusion, and a requisite delay for the recovery of their works gave the besieged time to prepare for the next design they might have in view.

It was conjectured they intended to detach part of their force to a small redoubt on the left of the Austrian line; a reinforcement was therefore requisite for its farther protection, and general Daun, whose opinion of Ethelwald strengthened with each day's experience of his courage and indefatigable zeal, hesitated not in giving him the command of it.

Proud of the post to which he was appointed, and flushed with the success that had hitherto marked his progress, he hastened with his men; but had scarcely entered it, when the expectation was verified by the approach of the Prussians, who in great numbers drew up their force, and

commenced a heavy fire, while others were seen escalading the exterior slopes of the works.

Ethelwald, dreading lest his men, awed by the powerful force they beheld collected against them, should suffer a momentary fear to render them incapable of acting, and perhaps even induce them to surrender, flew unobserved to the gate, and having locked it, deposited the key in safety, and returned to his post.

As he anticipated it proved, for his troops, believing all resistance on their part must be vain against those with whom they contended, had endeavoured to secure their safety by flight, and were eagerly making for the gate, with an intention of leaving the fort to their powerful opponents, but he followed, and with determined resolution vowed to sacrifice every man who would attempt to desert him at such a moment.—“We must, my lads,” he said, “conquer or die! surely it is worth the effort; but if you return to the

garrison, boast that, with coward fear, ye forsook your officer, who stands or falls by your decision. We have yet time—let us return to the charge, and prove we are soldiers, not the minions of cowardice—let our enemies at least see us determined to sell our lives rather than our liberty.”

Convinced by his arguments, and defeated in their prospect of passing the gate, they returned with him, and, animated by his heroic example, made so powerful a resistance, that the enemy, seeing the failure of their promised success, withdrew in disorder, leaving them undisturbed possession of the fort, which his judicious conduct had alone preserved.

Such a striking instance of intrepidity and judgment in so young an officer procured him universal applause, and his men gloried in serving under a commander who animated them by the example he himself set. But they were still harassed by the Prussians, who obstinately continued the siege, and succeeding months saw each party employed in forming mines

and countermines to annoy the other, while scenes of distress were frequently the result. Houses and people were constantly destroyed by the shells of the enemy thrown into the town, or from the explosion of a magazine, by which numbers perished.

Ethelwald's heart recoiled from the misery he too often witnessed; but he paid every attention to the sufferers, and seldom an accident occurred, in which he was not the first to offer consolation and assistance to those who survived.

He was sitting alone in his quarters, towards the close of a day, when Sebastian passed his window in company with a soldier, and he heard him say—"Ay, poor soul! it had been quite as well if she had gone with them."

On his entering the room, Ethelwald inquired of whom he had been speaking?

Sebastian replied—Hugo had just told him a poor woman who resided at some distance from the garrison, had been to

procure provisions for her family, consisting of a husband and four children, all of whom she had left at home during her absence, but on her return found only a heap of ruins, in which they had perished, from a shell that had destroyed her dwelling with several others; and that having seen the mangled remains of her husband, and finding her children had suffered the same fate, she had been running through the streets in a state of distraction.

“And where is she now?” he inquired, impatiently.

“Hugo’s wife has, at last,” he said, “prevailed on her to go into her house, but she is, your honour, in a pitiable state.”

Without waiting to hear more, Hugo was sent for, and desired to conduct him to his habitation, and thither he hastened to inquire what could be done for her.

On entering he beheld the object of his search supported in a chair, by the wife of Hugo, and frantically calling on her lost husband and her hapless children, while a

lovely young woman, in a voice of gentleness, entreated her to be calm.

She turned on hearing Ethelwald speak; and even the wretched being before him could not render him an indifferent spectator of the most interesting countenance he had ever seen. Her dress, though elegantly neat, plainly distinguished her from the class by which she was surrounded, had not the attention every one paid her convinced him her presence was considered an honour. Approaching her, therefore, with respect, he said—"I came hither, madam, to learn what assistance I could render the unhappy woman whose melancholy fate has just reached me, but I rejoice to find her sorrows have interested a being so much better calculated to soften her afflictions; having, therefore, only pecuniary relief to extend when she is sufficiently recovered to need it, I will retire, since convinced at present I can render her no service."

She timidly replied, when he had ceased speaking, that she feared their united ef-



forts would avail but little, till time had softened the poignancy of her grief, and the shock she had received, but added—  
 “I shall not leave her until I have the satisfaction of finding her more composed, and will then endeavour to see what more can be done for her; in the mean time, should she need the assistance you so generously offer, I will find some means of making you acquainted with her situation.”

“That trouble, madam,” he returned, “may be rendered less, if you will honour me by taking this card, and be assured, when called on, I shall gladly contribute my portion to her necessities.”

He then quitted the dwelling, and hoped some one would follow him, of whom he could ask the name and consequence of the lovely stranger to whom he had been speaking; but they were too much occupied, and he returned silently through the street.

In his way to the garrison, the dejected countenances of the inhabitants struck him

as mournful presages of the increasing calamities they had still to expect, and a hopeless kind of melancholy sat on every feature, for though their great exertions harassed the enemy, and kept them at bay, they were in turn perpetually distressed by the shells, which assailed them in various directions. One alternative alone remained to the besiegers, when every expedient had failed of completing their great design, and this they now meditated to adopt. Preparations were accordingly made for a breach, and this information had no sooner been obtained in the garrison, than new mines were sprung for the purpose of at least retarding the threatened danger, and had, in some instances, the desired effect, as they seldom failed of blowing up what new works the enemy had erected, and always threw them into confusion; but in so doing, many valuable lives were lost on their side.

A few nights succeeding that in which Ethelwald had seen the lovely woman of whom he had often since thought, a mine

was to be sprung from which much execution was expected; and upon inquiry who had the particular direction of it, learned it devolved to a very old but worthy officer, whose want of interest had retarded his promotion, which had never exceeded the rank of captain.

Ethelwald recollected, from the description given him, it was the one who had expressed himself so much pleased with his answer to the general on his first introduction among them, and now inquired of the officer to whom he spoke why they so seldom saw him but when on duty? at which time he had often derived pleasure from his conversation, which proved him possessed of great abilities.

“Because,” replied the young man to whom he addressed himself, “he is constantly shut up with his wife and daughter, whom he imprisons, lest we should get a sight of the fair divinity, for I understand she is considered such by those who have been thus honoured; but he invites no one to his house, and during three

months he has been here, for he joined us full two before you came, I don't believe there is an officer in the garrison who has entered his doors. In the next place, he is believed to be very poor, therefore his acquaintance is not particularly courted, though he is certainly a very clever man."

Ethelwald felt disgusted at the unfeeling remarks of his informer, from whom he was turning when a party of officers, in passing, joined them. The conversation then became general, and Ethelwald shortly after retired.

On entering his own room, he perceived a note lying on the table, whose superscription was unknown to him, and he hastily broke it open and read—

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"Minute observation convinces me I cannot err in the character I am now addressing. Yes, De Valmont, though so often deceived, I feel a conviction, if sincerity yet exists, in thee I shall find it

—that the disparity of our years will not make thee less my friend, when thou shalt be told how much I need one. Say, art thou disposed to accept my confidence? but hesitation now will add to the sorrows of an already-oppressed man. It is not in pecuniary concerns you can serve me: I have a dearer cause to impart, on which my last ray of comfort depends, and which emergency only could wring from me. To be further explicit, we must meet, and that instantly: but I will not urge thee more, lest thy generous nature should interest thee in my cause beyond thy inclination, for shouldst thou refuse it, I shall not esteem thee less, convinced thou wilt act from the impulse of prudence, and not merely to wound my feelings. But on thy answer all depends.

“AUGUSTUS HOFFMAN.”

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Astonishment for a moment enveloped every sense, but again he perused the letter, and no longer hesitated how to act.

He had, from his first knowledge of the writer, who was the captain of whom he had that very evening heard so much, felt a respect for him, which the intelligence he had received tended much to strengthen.

An opportunity offered, in which, from his letter, it was probable he might convince him of the high estimation in which he held him, by rendering him any service his limited power enabled him to do. He therefore instantly dispatched Sebastian with a note expressive of his anxious wish to prove his readiness of complying with any request he might think proper to make, and in a few minutes he returned, followed by the captain, whom he introduced.

Ethelwald having himself reached him a chair and dismissed Sebastian, endeavoured to waive all ceremony in the interview, by entering first on the subject which had caused it; and this he did by a second assurance that he felt himself

happy in being thus called on to oblige, in any way whatever, captain Hoffman.

"But you are yet, my young friend, unacquainted with the weight of that obligation," he replied, "and I tremble lest you should reject it."

"That cannot be," returned Ethelwald, "for you can ask nothing incompatible with my duty as a soldier; and any claims on my feelings as a man, be assured, shall not be rejected."

"Then," he exclaimed, with clasped hands, "Heaven has not deserted me! My Laura, my Georgiana, will each find a protector!"

"Calm your agitation, my dear sir," said Ethelwald, anticipating he knew not what. "You are surely distressing yourself too much: tell me what I can do to render you more happy?"

"You have already made me so," he cried, taking his hand, and pressing it with fervour: "I will be calm; but first, De Valmont, hear whom you are about to

serve. In me you behold the victim of a father's wrath: never from my infant days had a thought or inclination of mine offended that parent who renounced me for ever, when I espoused the daughter of a man he had sworn to hate. 'Twas not enough that he deprived me of a fortune he could so well have bestowed, and which my birth demanded, but his curses must for ever blast each shining prospect of my future years; they followed me with increasing rigour through his life, and extended even beyond the grave, for still I feel them; the ungrateful world copied his example, and helped to crush me. Uncountenanced, save by rectitude and unblemished honour, I have struggled through years of humiliation, ingratitude, and deceit: but 'tis past, and I had still ties to recompense me for the deprivation of fortune's smiles, and regretted the want of them but as they precluded my administering more largely to the comforts and convenience of a beloved wife and two children, far dearer than my own ex-



instance. But I must be brief, for time presses. I have, this night, the command of the expected sally, which may or may not be successful: as a soldier, I am fearless, for never yet was the valour of Hoffman questioned, even by his direst enemy; but as a husband and father, I am vulnerable, and feel a strange presentiment that all will not go well: on this supposition I have sought your friendship, for my boy, in whom I could have found a protector for his mother and sister, is far away—the only relation beside to whom I could consign them at a still greater distance: say then, generous De Valmont, if I fall, may I trust you will not forsake them till my Augustus can release you from the charge?—shall I assure them in parting, they will not be destitute of a protector whom I have chosen for them? It may be they will not need any other than myself, and that I shall return to thank you for a promise that has removed a weight of care from this long-burthened breast. Should I fall, my dying moments;

spoiled by my reliance on your veracity, shall be spent in blessing you."

"If my solemn assurance," said Ethelwald, "can convince you how readily I acquiesce with the request you have made, believe me it is given with sincerity; but if in any way I can strengthen that assurance more to your satisfaction, name it."

"Your word," he replied; "is sufficient, for I have not to learn, it is your bond. Prepossessed in your favour when I first saw you, and heard sentiments that demanded admiration, I have ever since studied your character, and gloried in believing it was formed to resist the contamination to which it must be exposed. I loved your society, and would have gladly cultivated it by a more than common acquaintance—but it could not be; folly and impertinence. I have hitherto excluded from my humble mansion, in which I have a gem of purest worth, and had I admitted you, I must have subjected myself to the unfeeling remarks, nay, perhaps rudeness of those who could not know my man-

tive for the distinction; indeed, situated as I am, it could not have been. A few hours now will make you acquainted with my fate: if I survive, I will myself conduct you to my wife and daughter, to the latter of whom, strange as it may appear, you are not altogether unknown. Should I fall, you must seek alone their then miserable roof, and soften the intelligence you may have to communicate. I have written to my brother, the only relative on whom I have any claim, and who, I hesitate not to believe, will provide for them, though an extorted promise never to assist me obliged him to withhold what I have so often wanted, but, from a knowledge of his oath, never solicited. The barrier removed, he will become their friend, for his heart is not callous: it is, therefore, your protection only I entreat, till he can learn the particulars of their situation, for I would not ungenerously burthen you in a pecuniary way."

"But even that," replied Ethelwald, with energy, "as far as my abilities to

serve you or them depended, should not be withheld: still I trust your arrangement is unnecessary, and that we shall meet again in safety. Nor let me wound the feelings of honour, when I assert my readiness to take your post this night, if it can be done. On my existence there is no tie that can sustain an injury by the event, be it what it may; yours, as more valuable, should be preserved."

"Never, De Valmont," he returned, "could I swerve from my duty, or, to save my own life, endanger yours. This conference was not intended to propose a plan for evading the task allotted me, but to prepare me for it. I go comparatively happy, and leave you the pleasing satisfaction of having done every thing to render me so: enjoy then the reflection arising from a generous action, and, in the hour of need, may you never seek in vain for the consolation of friendship!"

Ethelwald again begged he would say every thing to madame Hoffman and his daughter, which might tend to comfort

them, and offered, as he was not on immediate duty, to pass the night with them, if he conceived it would, by diverting, lessen the horrors of that suspense they must unavoidably endure.

"I have been thinking," he replied, "it would be better so; but the result of our enterprise may then be abruptly communicated to you."

"Surely not," said Ethelwald, "for in that case I should give my servant orders to bring me the first report, and can rely on his punctually attending to my commands."

It was then agreed he should accompany him home, and be immediately introduced as the friend on whom they were for the future to rely for protection, if deprived of their present one.

He entered the house with varied sensations, but every faculty was suspended by surprise, when, in Laura Hoffman, he beheld the lovely woman who, with such apparent kindness, attended the poor widow.

A smile of anguish played on her features, as she marked the astonishment he evinced at again beholding her, and with a faltering voice she said, as her father announced his name—"We are destined, monsieur De Valmont, to meet in scenes where sorrow predominates."

"At present, mademoiselle," he answered, "I regret there is too much truth in your observation; but it gives rise to hopes, that when a fairer sun dawns on our present prospects, I shall not be excluded from the honour I now enjoy."

She shook her head mournfully, as if doubting that sun was not to rise for them, but added—"In that case, we should be very unworthy the attention you now favour us with." She then led him to her mother, on whom sorrow had fixed its indelible mark; the traces of beauty were still visible, but seemed gradually withdrawing from her face, only to shine more resplendent in that of her lovely daughter.

Charmed with the appearance of each, Ethelwald would have willingly forgot

the cause which brought him there; but it was not possible, and when Laura said—“This, my dear madam, is indeed the generous friend whom sympathy brought to the relief of our poor sufferer,” she added, as tears filled her eyes—“Alas! how little, at that moment, I anticipated a second meeting under the present circumstances!”

“Yet, Laura, you should rejoice,” said her father, with firmness, “that Heaven has reserved me such a friend, and to his protection I resign you and my beloved Georgiana.” Taking a hand of each, and leading them to Ethelwald, he continued—“Behold, De Valmont, the sacred deposit I bequeath you; I say no more than that my own feelings convince me I can never regret the confidence I now place in your honour.”

“And when I am unmindful of it, or prove unworthy the confidence so placed, may I want the consolation of friendship in the most trying hour of my life!”

Madame Hoffman extended her hand

to him, and her expressive eyes swimming in tears plainly indicated the acknowledgments she would have made; but having in vain essayed to speak, she shook her head, and silently regained her seat, while Captain Hoffman said—"Georgiana, this is unlike your usual fortitude; I had hoped you would have convinced my young friend heroism in your sex could equal the bravery of ours, when put to the test. We have long been the tennis-ball of fortune, but hitherto your example has enabled me to bear up against the bitterest shafts of our destiny; do not then, my love, when I most need it, let me feel the deprivation."

Laura, who had hitherto alternately surveyed each without speaking, now said "Monsieur De Valmont will make every allowance for our present situation, when I tell him, that though we fondly anticipate my father's safe return will render the precaution he has taken needless, such was our terror at the idea of being left unprotected, at a period so replete with



horror, and so little reason had we to expect success from the application he was bent on making, that our feelings, the mingled sensations of gratitude and sorrow, must leave us debtors in thanks to his goodness."

"Rather suppress them, mademoiselle Hoffman," he replied, "till an opportunity has occurred, in which, by having really served you, my conduct may be deemed in any respect deserving of them: still, with you, I not only trust but believe you will have no farther occasion for my service than that which may arise from the benefit of society, during the interval of suspense that must of necessity take place, since captain Hoffman will not allow of my exchanging duty with him for the night."

"Surely not," he replied; "you must, in that case, for ever despise the pusillanimity that, even for such a wife and child, could sacrifice the friend who has already proved my opinion of him was not erroneous. But time speeds: Laura will

acquaint you with the arrangements I have made; for a soldier," he added, "ought always to be prepared for the worst. I must now seek my men, who will otherwise be expecting me," and have only once more to entreat, my Georgiana, you will check this immoderate sorrow;" for madame's grief had amounted to agony.

Eliza, with an affectionate solicitude, suppressed her own, and now joined her entreaties that her beloved mother would be composed: but it was in vain, and when her husband, in tearing himself from her embrace, said—"Our separation will be short—we shall meet again," in a state little short of distraction she replied—"Yes, my Augustus, we shall meet, but it will be where pain and sorrow can no longer divide us," and sunk senseless on the floor.

For some time their efforts to recover her were ineffectual, and when returning sense enabled her to recollect the past, she

inquired how long she had been ill, and if any accounts had yet reached them?

Ethelwald assured her it was impossible the result could be known for some hours, but that his servant had strict orders to hasten with the first intelligence. He then exerted himself to render her unmindful of the lapse of time, while he beheld with admiration the exemplary conduct of Laura, who, regardless of but her afflicted parent, assumed a degree of fortitude that surprised him.

The morning at length dawned, and renovated nature smiled; but they were still the victims of suspense, and at the earnest entreaties of each, Ethelwald left them to make inquiries on which their dearest hopes rested, but had scarcely reached the garrison when Sebastian met him, with a countenance fully expressive of the melancholy tale he had to impart.

"I have, your honour," he said, "left a scene of confusion surpassing all we have yet witnessed, and was hastening to tell you the particulars: our men have en-

countered a resistance so powerful, that very, very few of the party have returned capable of giving the account. Numbers are destroyed, and many more severely wounded; among the latter, captain Hoffman."

"In pity to his family, recall that sentence, my good fellow," he articulated. "Where have you left him? Be brief, that I may seek him to learn more; and yet, Heaven knows," he continued, "how I shall reveal the truth to them if it is so."

Even Sebastian, whose heart was not formed in nature's softest mould, interested by the wretched appearance of those who had escaped, and were bringing in their wounded comrades, could not suppress feelings that Ethelwald had hitherto believed he did not possess.

"Indeed, your honour," he replied, "I have this moment left him on a litter in the guard-room, to which he was conveyed at his own request. I was, as you desired, waiting for news to bring your honour,

and when he was brought in, I made myself known to him, and, by his orders, was now coming to fetch you."

They were by this time arrived, and Ethelwald's worst fears realized, when he beheld the mutilated form of his poor friend, who had indeed survived the carnage but to suffer from more lingering torments. He was surrounded by his brother-officers, all of whom anxiously sought assistance to preserve the life of a man so worthy—but they were vain efforts. A faint smile illumined his features when he beheld De Valmont, and he extended his now-only hand; the other, shattered by a musket-ball, lay useless by him.

In a voice hardly intelligible, he said—"You will now prepare my family, and I shall be conveyed home."

Ethelwald having given what orders he deemed expedient for his removal, in which every-one kindly assisted, returned to madame Hoffman. He would have communicated his intelligence first to Laura, but they were still together. Hav-

ing, therefore, in the gentlest terms named the failure of the expedition, he entreated they would suppress the agitation that must be so detrimental to the present state of captain Hoffman.

Despair seemed to have armed his amiable partner with resolution, and she waited his arrival with a calmness more alarming than her late grief had been.

Laura surveyed her mother with a doubtful anxiety, then looked at Ethelwald, as if to penetrate his opinion of her, and the next turned her eyes to the door, in painful expectation of what she had to behold.

The awful silence was at length broke, and the adored husband—the revered father was placed before them. He still breathed, but the exertion had been too much, and threatened to hasten the extinction of that life which already trembled on the verge of eternity. Restoratives were applied, and for a moment recalled the faint receding spirit. He fixed his

dying eyes on his beloved relatives, as they stood motionless near him. At last, after some efforts, he said—"My God, I thank thee that I have been spared thus long! I bless thee also for the fortitude thou hast granted!" (for as he gazed on his wife and daughter, no tear spoke the anguish they endured.) "Continue," he added, "thy mercy!—for ever bless the generous De Valmont, and may my poor boy reward him for such goodness!—I never can!"

An awful stillness no one attempted to interrupt reigned throughout the apartment while he spoke. Madame Hoffman had raised his hand to her lips, and still clasped it, but it was now inanimate—the genial current no longer flowed to its pure source—every function had ceased, and of the gallant soldier, the sympathizing friend, and the affectionate parent, a lifeless form only remained.

Ethelwald would have drawn Laura and her mother from the mournful scene, but the latter, with a resignation that

evinced the strength of an exalted mind, said—"One moment longer, monsieur De Valmont, and I yield implicit obedience to your will." Turning to her daughter, she added—"Laura, we have lost him—he is gone, and with him all our little stock of earthly happiness: what, therefore, have we now to live for?"

"Much, my dear mother," she replied, with energy: "what is to become of our poor Augustus, if, in addition to the fatal intelligence that must soon reach him, is added, that, incapable of sustaining a trial which is the dispensation of Providence, his mother and sister sunk beneath the rod, and, to spare their own feelings, left him to struggle, without one endearing tie, in this vale of care?"

Ethelwald gazed on her with astonishment, and madame Hoffman, convinced by her argument, replied—"True, my Laura, I have been guilty of injustice to my poor boy, but the deprivation of his adored father must plead my excuse; henceforth I will strive to live for his child.



dren, and endeavour to believe, in so doing, I fulfil his dearest wish.—I am now, monsieur De Valmont," she continued, "ready to attend you, but I must be permitted to return, for I have not yet reconciled myself to resign for ever my lost Augustus."

Happy to see a tranquillity surpassing what he had expected, he readily promised she should repeat her visit to the chamber of death whenever she thought proper, since it was an indulgence her fortitude and self-command entitled her to expect. He then accompanied them to another room, but they had scarcely entered it when nature demanded relief for the restriction it had undergone, in the suppressed feelings of Laura.

On entering the apartment, a likeness of her father, which she had herself taken a short time before, caught her sight; she clasped her hands in agony, breathed a prayer for his sainted ashes, and burst into tears. Madame Hoffman wept with her; there was also another eye from

which the unbidden tear having escaped its boundary, fell unreprieved—Nay, blush not, reader; if those are sacred which bedew a warrior's grave, can that be less valuable that dates its source from a generous feeling mind, even though its channel should be the manly cheek of a soldier? It was a tribute to departed worth which commiseration taught to flow, and if it may be termed a weakness, let the remembrance of it be momentary, since the impulse was such.

The relief Laura experienced from this transient indulgence of grief enabled her to acquaint Ethelwald with the arrangement her father had made for their future proceedings, but added—"I fear you will find us a heavy tax, monsieur De Valmont, since my uncle, who generally resides at his family seat in Languedoc, must be some time before he can receive and answer the letter it will now be requisite to forward to him, and my brother may find some difficulty in obtaining leave

of absence from his regiment to visit his afflicted family."

He assured her, but from a conviction the removal would be attended with comfort and convenience to herself and madame Hoffman, he should anticipate with infinite regret the period which must unavoidably deprive him of society he should have so eagerly cultivated; as it was, every moment he could steal from duty should be devoted to their service.

Neither the uncertain state of the garrison, which was still sustaining almost incessant fire from the enemy, nor the state in which captain Hoffman died, would admit of his funeral being long delayed; he was therefore interred with military honours, a ceremony that received additional solemnity from the horrors with which they were surrounded, and which threatened yet to increase.

Ethelwald was still indefatigable in his duty, but every interval it allowed he passed with his amiable friends, and by

his attentive kindness soothed their sorrow, and cheered the solitude in which they lived. He had one evening left them at an early hour, being on guard for the night, and as his brother-officers on the same duty were differently employed, he strolled round the works, almost unconscious of a motive for so doing. An unclouded moon threw its resplendent light on every surrounding object, and he contrasted the scene in which that beautiful orb now moved to those in which he had so lately wandered with general Durand and his favourite Albert. Regardless of the movement, he rested his arm on a gun near which he was standing, and in a moment, forgetful of all around him, gradually retraced his journey, till in imagination he had even entered Beauvoir, and, seated by Katherine St. Aubin, was anxiously inquiring of all that had passed in his short absence. Neither was the revered De Valmont or the faithful Oswald excluded from the groupe he had in idea

collected, and which was reluctantly dispersed by the sudden vibration of the challenge given by the different sentinels to the rounds, as they passed on to detached posts of the works.

Thus disturbed, he moved to regain the guard-room, but in so doing his foot passed over a paper, on which the moon threw a light that added to the dazzling whiteness which had rendered it so plainly distinguishable from the ground.

On examination, it proved in form a letter, but without any superscription : he therefore violated no law of rectitude or honour in opening it to discover if its signature might enable him to restore it to the right owner ; but in that also he was disappointed, since its unfinished state still left a vacuum for the writer's name. It was then, perhaps, unimportant, and he might as well destroy it ; the resolution to do so was momentary, but it afforded sufficient time, as he was dividing the paper, for his sight to be arrested by a name deeply impressed on his mind. Propriety.

was no longer a barrier to the impulse it excited, and the manner in which it had fallen into his hands, he endeavoured to believe, justified him in reading it.

Having, therefore, put it in his pocket, he hastened to his quarters to avoid interruption, and with breathless impatience he perused and reperused its contents. Still its mysterious purport harassed and perplexed him, without producing a clue either to the writer or those for whom it was intended; yet, that he was himself in some way connected with it he could not hesitate to believe, any ~~more~~ than that he was better known in the garrison than, till that moment, he had supposed. He still continued holding the paper, on which, in an indifferent hand, was written—

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“DEAR FATHER,

“ Though, mayhap, this letter may never reach you, for we are too closely blocked up by the enemy to stand *much chance* of it, I cannot help writing.

to say how much I wish you was here just now, as I think you might see an old acquaintance, whom you have not heard of for many years, though I believe he has got a new name, that you don't know much about: howsomever, I can tell you the count De Vennuiel is certainly not dead, as you began to imagine; and I have good reason to think there is a young officer in the garrison who could give a pretty clear account of him if he pleased: but more of that when we meet, which will, I hope, be as soon as we are at liberty to go to and fro as usual.

“How goes on affairs at the forest? A thousand times I have cursed the unlucky chance that obliged me to leave all the hearty fellows there; but I comfort myself with a hope it will not be for ever, and that I shall yet once more get among them. Remember me to them, but in particular Jaques, and tell him I have also discovered an old friend of his, as well as yours, by the name of Oswald: but as my news will surprise you, I will tell you how

I came by my information.—You must know we have got——”

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By the blank which ensued, it appeared as if the writer had been suddenly interrupted; and while a thousand vague conjectures crossed his mind, Ethelwald in vain essayed to fix on any one that might promise a prospect, however distant, of his tracing the unknown correspondent.

“Count De Vennuiel is then destined to cross my path,” he silently ejaculated, “for I am doubtless the officer who am supposed to know so much of him; and yet, after all, what farther knowledge of him have I, than that derived from common report? and who in this place should know have ever visited his villa, since I have certainly never named having done so?” Then Oswald!—there were certainly many of that name in the world, beside the one he had loved from a child.

But unconnected as all this appeared, he adhered to believing it links of one



chain, and that that chain centered in his destiny. After a momentary reflection, he exclaimed—"It must be so! I cannot—will not forego an opinion every concurrent circumstance strengthens: the count De Vennuiel, whose sorrows I have so recently commiserated, has claims on my feelings I, till now, never suspected. How have I revered and pitied them under another form! for my heart tells me, and I dare not reject its dictates, that my beloved De Valmont is no other person, and, for reasons best known to himself, has adopted a name, by which I have been taught to venerate him. In doing this, I must renounce the hope that would sometimes persuade me I was his child, for the count De Vennuiel has none. Fool that I am!" he continued, on recollection; "how is my tortured mind driven by every blast! Did I not hear his aged domestic with sorrow affirm his lord was no more?—and yet the unlettered production of an anonymous writer has power to make me waver in a belief founded on the

assurance of those who, living in his service, must be best acquainted with his fate."

Sebastian at that moment entering his room to acquaint him with the hour, interrupted him, and having returned the letter to his pocket, he hastened to the guard-room, in which he perceived more of the officers than he had expected to find, and among them general Daun, who, observing his entrance, said—"There is, I fear, De Valmont, unpleasant news preparing for us. Indeed, I begin seriously to think the enemy will yet be too much for us, and that even now some scheme is preparing that bodes us no good; however, a few hours must determine, for we can already discern that their works are gaining on us with rapidity, and I have no longer an expedient untried to which we can resort. All that duty demanded in our sovereign's cause we have done—all that our own feelings suggested for the preservation of the place and our fellow-creatures has been tried, and the success

of a powerful enemy can attach no blame to men or officers, or depreciate the courage of either, for during the siege exemplary proofs have been given of what our brave fellows dare do: but the calls of humanity must now be, in some measure, attended to. We are to fight the battles of our country, but it is not for us to decide the victory; and if fortune still favours (and in this instance it decidedly does) those against whom we contend, while their superior force bears down all opposition, we are not to sacrifice to their swords the lives our bravery can no longer defend. If, therefore, the alternative is allowed, to capitulate on honourable terms would be meritorious, where longer to contest a lost point must be madness; for though the prevalent love of liberty, glowing in every breast, yet animates our troops, and leaves their minds still vigorous, their bodies are enfeebled by a succession of duty, and must eventually yield to the exertions *now* demanded;"—an opinion in which *his officers* coincided, as also that they had

little more to expect from their own success, which was fast declining, while that of the Prussians daily strengthened; and who, sensible of their own superiority, and equally so of the harassed state of the Austrians, determined on instantly coming to terms.

In consequence of which, a flag of truce was sent to the garrison, stating, that unless they surrendered as prisoners of war, and not only laid down their arms, but that under a restriction of not acting again during the war on the offensive, no quarter would be given in the meditated attack on the town by a still closer siege-ment, for which every preparation was then made; but if the first terms were acceded to, the troops were at liberty to march into Breslaw, and the garrison to be left open for the reception of the Prussians, who would take immediate possession of it.

To men who had no alternative, the decision required but little consideration; and general Daun having submitted the proposal to his officers, their approbation was

unanimously given in favour of the capitulation, and the following day saw them evacuate the town they had for so many weeks nobly defended; nor, perhaps, do the annals of history afford a more striking proof of military ardour and discipline than the heroic defence of Schweidnitz.

## CHAPTER VI.

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As the greatest regularity was observed in their quitting the garrison, Ethelwald found little difficulty in procuring tolerable accommodation for his lovely and sorrowing friends on the march, who, even under the unpleasant circumstances which had caused the change, felt themselves relieved, when in a comfortable lodging, which he soon procured for them at Breslaw.

They were no longer subject to behold *the scenes of horror which had so lately*

appalled every sense; but madame Hoffman became impatient for intelligence of her brother, as she daily dreaded orders might arrive, which, by removing Ethelwald, must deprive them of a protector, a circumstance that would, she felt convinced, render them very uncomfortable, notwithstanding they were now removed from the seat of war. She had also another, and not less weighty motive for that impatience: a knowledge of the world, founded on experience, and derived from the various characters with whom she had associated, enabled madame Hoffman to study, with some accuracy, the human heart: she easily perceived Ethelwald De Valmont's was the seat of every virtue, and at the moment she admired those virtues, almost regretted their possessor was not less perfect—a regret which arose from the source of maternal solicitude.

She knew the purity of Laura's mind, and feared that, at the moment it placed her above the danger of becoming a sacrifice to superficial merit, it must inevitably

expose her to that of forming an attachment, where real worth was blended with the pleasing exterior of such a form as the friend in whose society she now passed so much of her time.

As yet, she flattered herself gratitude and friendship were the only sentiments that biassed her conduct towards him; but as every day must strengthen their mutual attachment to him, by more powerfully evincing his liberal and exalted mind, she trembled for the hitherto-undisturbed peace of her beloved girl, and would have warned her against a susceptibility she allowed so justifiable, but that was to precipitate her into the danger, from which she wished rather to lead her, as if unconscious that she deemed it such.

She herself loved him with a parent's warmth, but dared not indulge a momentary hope that he would ever become more to her than the friend and protector she had hitherto found him, for, at most, she was convinced a few weeks must separate them, perhaps for ever; and though



she flattered herself they should always retain his friendship, which she valued so highly for his conduct towards them, she knew that friendship, cherished in absence, would rather diminish than strengthen, unless supported by, or blended with love, and the latter was a sentiment she had not yet discovered in the respectful attention he paid Laura, whom he still appeared to consider, what her partial fondness had ever thought her, a superior being: but though in all the elegant accomplishments in which she excelled he frequently took a part, accompanied her music, or selected drawings, which she never failed to finish in an animated and masterly style when he had chosen them, or read to them while madame Hoffman and herself were working, it was still the delicate attention their peculiar situation demanded; and while every action spoke the kindly interested friend, never betrayed the impassioned lover. But a trivial incident, which shortly after occurred, fully convinced her a prior engagement, young as he was, pre-



cluded the probability of his ever becoming such to Laura.

On his entering the room one morning, she was playing a little air he had never heard since he left his own country, and of which he was passionately fond, probably because it was also a favourite of Katherine St. Aubin. He entreated a repetition of it, and when she had ceased playing, remained apparently unconscious of the conclusion.

At length starting from his reverie, he exclaimed—"Pardon, mademoiselle Hoffman, my rudeness, in neglecting my acknowledgments for your acquiescence, but your inimitable performance of that little piece brought so powerfully the scenes of my early days, and those dear to my remembrance, that I could have listened for hours had I known it formed part of your valuable collection, and I should have been very troublesome in requesting you to play it."

"I can deem no request of yours such," she replied, "when the obligation time

itself can never cancel is so deeply engraven on our memories."

"Then pray," returned he, "would you have me understand the affectionate attention of madame Hoffman, which I am so happy to receive, the sisterly regard with which her lovely daughter has hitherto honoured me, is merely the impulse of a supposed debt they believe themselves under for the trivial service it has been in my power to render them?"

"Call it not trivial," she said, "when we are so fully sensible of the extent."

"It is, however, decidedly so, since it has imposed an idea that a return was requisite," returned Ethelwald. "If it had been sufficient to purchase the friendship I must ever value so highly, I might have considered it of some consequence, but since you talk of obligations, it is I who must seek for new instances to prove how anxious I am of convincing you I am the debtor, by the confidence which my lamented friend placed in me, and the

opinion that deemed me worthy the sacred trust."

With a smile of ineffable sweetness, she said—"There is a merit in yielding to an opponent against whom we have no chance of succeeding; therefore I have nothing more to say on the subject. But tell me, have you ever heard this little piece before?"

"A thousand times," he returned, "in my native vale, where I have a lovely friend, who, though she does not vie with mademoiselle Hoffman's excellence in music, nevertheless plays with much taste—and this was a favourite air of hers; you will then cease to wonder I should derive so much pleasure from hearing it in a distant country."

"Surely not," she replied, "and be assured I shall derive additional satisfaction in practising it, from a knowledge that I can impart pleasure to you by so doing."

He thanked her in animated terms, and said—"How happy, my sweet friend,

I should be, if our present situation admitted a probability of my introducing you to the lovely girl of whom I have been speaking! Her heart is formed for friendship, and she would rejoice in having such a companion as yourself, for Katherine St. Aubin is, I am convinced, exactly the woman madame Hoffman would approve for her daughter's acquaintance."

"I am equally obliged," she said, "by your kind intention, but almost angry at your having portrayed, in such pleasing colours, a happiness it is not possible I should ever enjoy; for Heaven knows," she continued, "when we are removed from this place, if we shall ever be permitted to behold again our generous protector, for we have hitherto been destined to lose every tie that endears us to existence."

Ethelwald saw a starting tear, but she checked its progress, as she continued—"I had hoped my brother's arrival would have enabled us to introduce you to each

other, before the separation took place; we should then have occasionally heard of your welfare, for I feel convinced the friendship you have already extended to his unhappy family would not have been withheld from our poor Augustus. Indeed, you must allow much for a sister's partiality, when I affirm, that to be beloved he need only be known."

"At any rate," replied Ethelwald, "as the son of captain Hoffman, and the brother of my amiable friend, I am prepared to offer him a warm interest in my esteem, and shall trust the chance of war will yet favour our meeting, even should you have left Breslaw without my enjoying that pleasure."

At this moment madame Hoffman entered the room, with letters she had been writing, and named her employment as an apology for her absence; and Ethelwald shortly after took his leave, with a promise of returning early in the evening.

Laura seated herself at her drawing-table, where she was colouring some flowers

she had copied from nature, and her mother, as was frequently her custom, read to her.

A particular passage of the author having struck her, she rested the book on the table, and was making her comments on it, when she exclaimed, in a voice of gentleness—"Laura, my love, what are you doing?"

She raised her eyes from the paper, and, as if embarrassed by the interrogation, repeated—"What am I doing?"

"Surely," replied madame Hoffman; "you have committed an error? is it usual to blend yellow leaves with a damask rose?"

"Certainly not," she replied; "can I have been so absurd?"

More than ever confused, by discovering that it was actually the case, she confessed her thoughts had involuntarily wandered from her employment, and began hastily to remedy the defect, by washing out the shades.

Her mother watched the motion, with-

out appearing to do so; and fancied she perceived all was not right. Her hand trembled, and there was evidently emotion she strove to conceal. Her affection caught the alarm, and she said—"You are not well, my dear girl, and shall not tease yourself with a mistake that can be remedied another time; at present I must prevail on you to lay it aside."

Her kindness but added to the embarrassment of Laura, and the more she endeavoured to persuade her mother the fears she expressed were groundless, the more she laid herself open to the scrutiny of a parent, whose every happiness was centered in the beloved children of her departed Augustus, and for the first time she suspected Laura had submitted to artifice: the present was not, however, a moment for investigation, and she appeared to accept the ill-supported excuse she had made for her inattention, but determined, with anxious solicitude, to watch for the confirmation of all her fear—that Ethelwald was no longer so indifferent to her as she

had wished to believe he yet was; and she trembled for the event of such a discovery. But her suspense was of short duration, for Laura, much too artless to support with credit the deception she had imposed on herself, daily discovered to the penetrating eye of parental affection, the love she never told; but in the presence of Ethelwald she was another being, for not even the closest discernment could have traced a sentiment beyond that she had always expressed for him; but when he left them, as if weary of the restraint she had undergone, her features resumed the pensive cast that spoke her inward feelings, and madame Hoffman waited only a favourable opportunity of introducing a subject which she no longer hesitated to believe was the source of her inquietude.

The favourite piece had one evening been played over more than once, and Laura received her usual praise for the performance of it, when madame Hoffman inquired what had so particularly recom-



mended it to his favour?—"For though I own," she added, "there is a pleasing simplicity in the production, yet there are many pieces you play, which I think more striking in the effect."

But she was no sooner informed by Ethelwald of his motive for the partiality, than the whole truth flashed on her mind, and no farther elucidation of Laura's conduct became requisite: she was then struggling under the laudable effort of subduing a passion she was no longer justified in cherishing, but which evidently, on her part, existed.

"I must then," said this exemplary mother, "first wound her feelings still deeper by an acknowledgment of the discovery I have made, and then trust to absence and her own strength of mind for effecting the cure."

Ethelwald, animated by the subject madame Hoffman's question had given rise to, spoke of Beauvoir, his loved friend, and expatiated, as usual, on the merits of Ka-

therine St. Aubin, again expressing a wish that he could introduce her to their acquaintance.

"We are certainly prepared to esteem her," said madame Hoffman, "should chance ever favour us with an interview; for no friend of monsieur De Valmont's can be indifferent to us, and a favourite one must have still stronger claims on our attention."

Laura seconded the assurance, and added—"You may at least tell mademoiselle St. Aubin, when next you meet, her favourite air will never be played without exciting a wish on the part of Laura Hoffman to be better known to her. Our prayers for your welfare must be unremitting, and those prayers will include all that are dear to you."

Madame Hoffman was pleased with this exertion; and though she felt a pang, from the conviction that it was a painful effort, rejoiced that she still held such a command over her feelings.

Ethelwald had taken an early leave, and

she determined no longer to defer naming the surmises she feared were too well founded, and began by saying—"How is it, my love, that your spirits of late seem tempered solely by the presence or absence of monsieur De Valmont? It was not always thus."

With a cheek suffused by blushes, she replied—"I am not sensible of that change myself. True, I was just then thinking seriously, but the subject was of little import; it was merely if mademoiselle St. Aubin is as handsome as she is said to be amiable."

"That is, indeed," returned her mother, "of little consequence in the scale of merit; but it is evident, her attractions are sufficient, whether mental or personal, though I should rather believe she possessed both, to rate her very high in the estimation of our young friend, for he is evidently her captive."

This was indeed touching the chord "on which her sorrows hung." But her fortitude had still a momentary triumph,

and she said, with a degree of eagerness —“ Surely my uncle cannot delay much longer acquainting us with his decision as to our future destiny. How anxiously I wish we were removed from hence!”

“ I am equally anxious for that removal,” replied madame Hoffman; “ but till now, my dear girl, I believed you did not participate in my impatience, from the indifference you have hitherto expressed: for myself, I must own, whenever the moment arrives, I shall regret the separation from monsieur De Valmont, because it must appear a final one; otherwise I shall rejoice when he is liberated from the task, in which he has acquitted himself with so much honour. I am happy you can part with him on the same terms;” and she fixed her beautiful eyes, beaming with softness, on her while she spoke.

“ What means my beloved parent?” said Laura: “ has she for a moment suspected me of a weakness for which I must blush? —has any action of mine betrayed a senti-

ment derogatory to the friendship I am authorized, nay bound to cherish for monsieur De Valmont?—Surely it cannot be,” she would have added, but the chord was already strained much too tight, the faint deception she had assumed no longer aided her cause, and having thrown her arms round the neck of madame Hoffman, bursting into tears, she exclaimed—“ Let me for ever bury in your bosom the remembrance of my fatal weakness, since to you I can no longer disown it: yes, my more than friend, I have deceived myself, and the task I have imposed on my feelings cannot expiate the error of which I have been guilty. “ But,” recovering herself, she added, “ all will yet be well: you will pardon my involuntary fault, and the cruel restraint under which I writhed, now removed, I shall still conquer; for surely it is only the penetrating eye of affection like yours could have discovered what I have been so cautious to conceal, otherwise my painful task has been vain indeed.”

Madame Hoffman assured her, while she

made every allowance for that partiality the merits of De Valmont demanded, she highly applauded the resolution which enabled her, in his presence, to support the dignity of conduct which she had ever noticed, on seeing her persevere; "and I need not remind my Laura," she continued, "her present feelings are comparatively happy, when put in competition with those of wounded pride, resulting from a conviction that it was even suspected she cherished unrequited love. A very short period at most must now remove us from Breslaw, and while in far distant scenes our gratitude retains its genial warmth for this too amiable friend, we must teach ourselves to veil in oblivion a lively remembrance of these pleasing qualifications that I ever feared must endanger the peace of my beloved Laura; and have now only to remind you, my happiness, ever dependent on yours, rests wholly on your continuing to support the conduct you have so judiciously adopted, and which I be-

lieve few young women so adequate to the performance of."

She then purposely changed the conversation, and spoke of her son, whose silence frequently gave her uneasiness, though she endeavoured to persuade herself he had written, but that owing to the confusion at Schweidnitz, she had never received the letter; and the more so, as Ethelwald asserted the same reason for the suspense in which he was kept respecting letters, not only from Albert, of whom he became impatient to hear, but also from Beauvoir; for as the chevalier De Valmont had promised to remit such part of his story as might be essential for him to know, he had long anticipated the arrival of every post likely to bring the desired information, and had hitherto mitigated the solicitude of madame Hoffman by an assurance that it was too probable their letters had shared the same fate—a circumstance to be expected, from the tumult which presided during the latter part of their stay in Sile-

sia, and the succeeding removal to Breslaw.

His own suspense was however terminated, on his return that evening to his quarters, for on the table lay two small packets. Albert's hand first caught his eye; but, anxious as he was to be assured of his welfare, to hear of the worthy general, and to know what they were then doing, a more powerful motive induced him to unclose the other first, whose superscription was that of the chevalier. He pressed the well-known hand to his lips, and with indescribable emotion, the result of affection, hope of he knew not what, and eager expectation, sat down to peruse its contents, which were as follow :—

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“ It is now so long, Ethelwald, since this hand was familiarized to epistolary correspondence, that my torpid faculties revolt from the task I have undertaken; yet you have my promise that I would write, and even the misanthrope De Valmont, though dead to every sense of



worldly maxims, retains a veneration for his word once passed. I have also yours, that my communication shall be sacred. Fame, on whose breath the happiness or misery of thousands depends, who can alike raise its minions to the pinnacle of glory, or blast the domestic peace of others, has already been the herald of your bravery; and if this deadened breast could know a momentary pleasure, I had felt its impulse: but let not the siren voice mislead you; a succession of brave deeds may raise you high in the military world—that world may, perhaps, reward you; I say perhaps, for it is often tenacious of rewarding merit, and you have no other dependence. But remember, the failure of one exploit may be attributed to the rashness of so young a soldier. The wheel of fortune is ever on the whirl—the fortune of war still less to be depended on. Be guarded then in your actions, and let succeeding events strengthen the opinion now raised. If you are still ambitious of becoming the favourite of men, I rejoice to

be an outcast from them : but I am retiring from the hated space they inhabit—you are entering its deceptive paths, and may escape the ruin which overwhelmed me, though it is hardly possible ; for nature formed you in a mould that has counteracted every attempt of mine to steel you against the blandishments of friendship and of love.

“ But mark me, Ethelwald :—when I aver they exist not, else had you and I known different fates, she has given you feelings for which you will one day curse her bounty, and a form that will one day lure you to that boasted shrine called happiness, but which I disown. Behold in me its ardent votary ! In my days of childhood I owned no other term ; in the sanguine years of youth followed, with avidity, the pleasing phantom ; and, in manhood, I grasped the full harvest of its early promises. Heavens ! existed there a being so blest as I was ? What am I now ?—a miser still. Yes, I have but exchanged the pursuit, and can laugh at the delusion

—have shut my heart to the remembrance of every former sentiment, and hug the honest despair that will never forsake me. But I must not be prolix, for my present employment ill suits the frame of mind I have so long adopted : but the partial account I have promised thee will avail little, and I have sometimes regretted having made it; for, harsh and sullen as are my manners, I believe you loved me, and I lament thou shouldst have done so, convinced it will add to the pang I must inflict, by averring that affection was the impulse of habit, not nature, for thou hast no tie to me.”

The paper dropped from Ethelwald's hand, and he sat motionless in the chair; a faintness seized him, and for some minutes he remained perfectly unconscious that he even existed.

At length, recovering himself, he exclaimed—“ Who then am I?”—and with eagerness again caught the expanded letter, as it lay before him. Increasing agitation still retarded the inquiry he wished

to satisfy; but having in part conquered it, he continued to read—

“ Yes, Ethelwald, thou art the child of doubt, imposed upon me: but I have sworn to protect thee, and I will do so. Yet, should future years bring thee to a knowledge of the unnatural parents that deserted thee in childhood, I must resign thee to them; and in that discovery I am deeply interested. For this purpose only I tell thee what thou art: the force of blood is great, and it may be thou wilt not always remain ignorant of the authors of thy existence; and such a knowledge might open a dawn of comfort on this side eternity, for even the wretched De Valmont.

“ I have now told thee all that concerns thyself; it were useless to add more. True, I could speak of a beloved wife, whom I have for ever lost—of a promising boy, whom Heaven in its mercy gave, but in its wrath deprived me of—of a friend, whom this hand hurled, unbidden, to his Maker’s presence—But that were to awake each maddened thought time has blunted—

Nay, start not, Ethelwald, I am no intruder!—yet he fell by my weapon—in self-defence I slew him, and his warm blood clotted on the hand that tells thee the deed. What then? I might have fallen by his, and left him to exist! Heaven knows I wished it. But then Adelaide—Ah! that must not have been!—Ethelwald, my brain is heated; I will finish this to-morrow. I dare not peruse what I have written, and cannot write more. Should you answer this, do not name the subject, for I have now for ever banished it. Monsieur St. Aubin means to forward letters, I find; therefore to him you must be indebted for intelligence of pecuniary matters. Oswald is well, and still the faithful servant of

“DE VALMONT.”

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“This, then,” said Ethelwald, “is the elucidation I have so long anticipated—this the promised hope that whispered I should be comparatively happy when acquainted with the mystery attached to my

birth! I now stand a lone being, without a relative or tie, save that of gratitude; am the child of his bounty, nameless and unknown! Vain expectation, that I shall ever find the unnatural parents who deserted me!—and having done so, what am I to hope from such a discovery?—would not my spirits revolt from the performance of my duty to such parents, and rather teach me to reject than solicit the love which, as their offspring, was my due? Yet the revered De Valmont is interested in the discovery; it might open a dawn of comfort: all then is not yet explained, and his assertion still animates me in the search I ought to make; for what do I not owe his goodness, if thrown, as I have reason to believe, on his charity? Might he not have left me in a state of ignorance, and felt justified in contributing just as much as would suffice for my existence, without forming my mind as he has done, and placing me in a situation to which my birth has probably no pretensions? for surely those to whom I owe my being could be

influenced by only two motives—I must either be the child of dishonour, whom it was requisite to conceal, or penury must have steeled their hearts against my claim: in either case, my profession is disgraced; I shall therefore hold my commission in trust only, till I have ascertained how far I am entitled to the honour my sovereign has conferred with it. In the mean time, the fatal secret must prey on my inward peace, aggravated by a farther knowledge of the chevalier's misery. The death of a beloved child, and even of an amiable wife, are events to which a mind like his would surely submit with fortitude: but the friend he killed!" and Ethelwald shuddered at the sentence, as it occurred to his recollection: "what injuries must he not have sustained, before he could lift his hand against such a tie? And then he spoke of Heaven's wrath, yet averred he was no murderer. It was then, perhaps, a duel?—Great God!" continued, "that such a practice should wear the semblance of honour! And what is the result to its mis-

taken victims?—Even in this instance the death of one has left a blank in society—the survivor is become a miserable exile from its blessings !”

Absorbed in the variety of sensations to which the chevalier's letter had given rise, he for some time totally forgot it was accompanied by others, which, at any period but the present, he would have opened with avidity ; and had not a reperusal of the first reminded him he was to expect intelligence from monsieur St. Aubin, he had probably continued regardless of the packet which still remained unopened : an idea that it might contain the promised letter urged him to examine the contents, and having opened the envelope, he found one from the general, a second from Albert, and the third, as he had fondly expected, from St. Aubin. The latter was first read, and contained, after affectionate inquiries of his welfare, many little incidents that had occurred since he left Beauvoir ; “ and this part of my letter,” he said, “ you will find a duplicate of Albert's, if you are still to-



gether, and for this reason—I know you equally interested in all that concerns Beauvoir and its environs, therefore, lest you should be separated too far to see each other's letter, I have communicated the same to both."

Of the chevalier De Valmont he said little, but that he was well, and lived, if possible, more than ever recluse; that he had sent to acquaint him with his intention of writing, in consequence of which Oswald called on him the next day, saying his master would be obliged by his allowing Ethelwald to draw on him for any sum of which he might stand in need, and that he would repay, with acknowledgments, the favour—"I have therefore, my dear boy," added St. Aubin, "entreated the general to be your banker, till such time as we are acquainted with your residence; to him, therefore, you will apply for any demand you may think proper to make."

His letter concluded with every affectionate remembrance from madams St. Aubin and his favourite Katherine.

who, he said, was yet far from reconciled to the separation, and often remarked, Beauvoir, deprived of her beaux, was no longer desirable—"Indeed," he added; "Ethelwald, I am half inclined to believe she would willingly shut herself up in the chateau, with the chevalier De Valmont, if he gave her any encouragement for so doing: but you, who know how carefully he shuns the sex, will think, with me, she has little chance of succeeding, even should she make an offer of sharing his solitude."

Ethelwald dwelt with pleasure on this part of the letter, since it was evident she regretted his absence, and that it was on his account the retirement of the chevalier was become pleasing. He ventured to believe, and even wished it possible, she might be received as a favoured visitor at the chateau, but dared not flatter himself with the half-raised hope. Every day convinced him she was still dearer to his affection, and he looked forward for a return to Beauvoir with ardent expectation: but

now he might never again behold her, since St. Aubin would shrink from an alliance with a man whose connexions were, like his, ambiguous; and to see her without the cherished hope of one day becoming her bosom's lord was insupportable.

He had, from his first leaving home, determined his future conduct, both private and public, should prove him worthy the distinction of her love: but he had now, in addition, to ascertain if his origin were such as could in no instance disgrace the woman he had in his heart selected, and whose influence over him even the graceful and all-accomplished Laura Hoffman could not weaken. He had sometimes thought the latter a dangerous companion, and, but for the remembrance of the artless Katherine, he felt he must have become her slave: yet he believed commiseration for her unprotected state was often blended with the high estimation in which he held her; and unconscious of his own attractions, or the elegance of manner for which he was distinguished, never dreamt

that, destitute of the shield which rendered him invulnerable, she was in danger of sacrificing that peace of mind a prior engagement might have secured.

Albert's letter, the last read, was not the least acceptable, and his heart glowed with the warm sentiments of disinterested friendship as he perused its dictates. He congratulated him with sincerity on the high encomiums he daily heard bestowed on his indefatigable attention to duty, and regretted, in terms equally ardent, that destiny had not allowed him to be a witness of the bravery so much extolled.—“I am here,” he added, “leading an inactive life, when compared to yours; indeed, have scarce sufficient duty to qualify me for any service on which I may be ordered, the ladies excepted—balls and *fêtes*, in which they preside, forming the greater part of our amusement here, and in which you will believe I am no way deficient; but I am still not quite satisfied that you should be culling a fadeless wreath, while

my pleasures pass away as a tale that is told; otherwise, I am very well pleased with Vienna, and highly flattered by the gracious reception I was honoured with from our royal master.

“The general is here quite at home, and I am not quite certain if the ladies, to whom he is more than ever devoted, are not half inclined to prefer a veteran to the younger soldiers—a conviction rather humiliating, you will allow, to myself and two or three dashing lads who form his suite; nor should I be at all surprised, if, after having for so many years espoused the cause of Mars, he should now make a transfer of his services, by entering into that of *Venus*: but, jesting apart, I have, since my arrival here, seen few men so universally respected as himself—I might add courted, for no party is deemed complete, in which general Durand is not present.

“I have,” he continued, “my dear fellow, received your truly welcome packet, which has been perused with more plea-

sure than I can describe, and am vexed my journal should prove so inadequate a return—not, you must be convinced, from inclination, but a dearth of incidents to render it interesting. We are, however, in daily expectation of being ordered from hence on service; it will then be my turn to amuse you with my heroic deeds, for I fear the world will not be civil enough to do it for me: but as I have always derived pleasure and credit from following your good example, I shall certainly endeavour to imitate, as far as possible, the conduct which must animate every young man desirous of promotion.”

General Durand's letter was concise, but expressive of the warm interest he took in his welfare: it urged him to a continuance of the mode of conduct he had adopted, and which could not fail to insure the approbation of his superior officers; concluding with farther assurances of that friendship he had already so well merited, and which he was warranted to be-

lieve he should ever be justified in cherishing for him.

His employment had so fully engaged his attention, that the hour of midnight passed unnoticed, and succeeding ones found him little inclined to seek his pillow; but Sebastian, having more than once made excuses into his room, by disturbing, reminded him, if he meant to retire at all, it was requisite he should then do so, and having carefully locked his escritoir, in which the welcome letters were deposited, he arose for that purpose.

In answer to some trivial question he had asked his servant, the sullen kind of answer he received made him involuntarily look at him, and he fancied his features, which were never tempered by any degree of gentleness, wore an aspect of more than common moroseness; and on a cool inquiry into what he meant by the language he had adopted, was told, that not having the same reason for turning night into day, he was desirous of going to bed in proper hours.

Ethelwald felt his resentment gaining ground; but vexed that a menial being should have such power on his temper, he checked the impulse, merely saying—"I shall certainly not detain you longer from your bed; but this conversation, Sebastian, must be renewed in the morning, and it is probable we shall part in consequence of it."

"With all my heart; a servant who knows you less may serve you better."—In saying which, he abruptly left the room.

Ethelwald would have recalled him, but stung with passion by an expression he was still at a loss to understand, determined to wait the event of morning. He had never liked the man, and often regretted he did not reject him on the unfavourable impression he first made; but an opportunity now offered for his extricating himself from him, and he resolved not to pardon the insult he had received, and for which he could in nowise account.

He had frequently marked the sullen countenance which betrayed the temper



he possessed, but he had never before treated him with disrespect; this was insufferable more: he therefore rose at an early hour, with a determination of having his motive for such conduct explained, and for which purpose he rang his bell.

Sebastian immediately obeyed the summons, at the same time introducing a gentleman, to whom he was a stranger, but whose features, nevertheless, favoured some one he had before seen. For a moment he looked at him, and the now well-remembered resemblance, with the sable dress he wore, convinced him he could not be mistaken in saying—"Have I the honour of speaking to the son of captain Hoffman?"

"The same," he replied; "and when I apologize for my early intrusion, by averring impatience to behold a mother and sister urged me to the violation of propriety, I dare trust monsieur De Valmont will pardon it."

"You have not then, my dear sir," returned Ethelwald, "as yet seen these be-

loved relatives, who are equally impatient for an interview they began to despair of enjoying, and I shall have the pleasure of leading you to them. In the mean time, let me assure you they are well, and as comfortable as the state of affairs will permit; but, indeed, the strength of mind these amiable women possess enables them to rise superior to every thing I have yet beheld in the sex."

"Were I not convinced," said Augustus Hoffman, "from the trial she has sustained, that my mother is blessed with more than common fortitude, I should be led to believe your flattering opinion of her was the result of that goodness which has already laid us under obligations that must still leave us debtors in gratitude."

Ethelwald assured him it was the only subject he must prohibit his entering on, and then said—"As I am anxious to be the pleasing herald of your arrival, we will lose no time in setting out; but lest the surprise should be too great, I will precede your *entrée* a few minutes, and an-

nounce the stranger madame Hoffman despaired of seeing before she left Breslaw."

As his visits were confined to no hours within the day, he was received with the usual welcome, and Laura hastily inquired if he had already breakfasted?

"I purpose doing so with you," he said, "but must first entreat your sanction for the admission of a young friend, whom I shortly expect."

"And why does he not accompany you?" said madame Hoffman: "were you doubtful of his reception?"

"On the contrary, my dear madam," he returned, "I have reason to believe he will engross all your attention, when presented, for his visit is in part made to you."

"Ah! tell me then," she exclaimed, "for I can bear the happy intelligence, my Augustus is arrived—my heart assures me it must be so!"

"I have always," returned Ethelwald, "admired your penetration, but we will

now, mademoiselle Laura, pronounce your mother a prophetess, since she has so well divined my business, which is indeed to acquaint you I have had the pleasure of an interview with monsieur Hoffman, and that he is now waiting impatiently to be admitted."

"Delay then no longer," she said, "my promised happiness!—let me once more clasp to this widowed heart the child of my affection."

A few minutes saw him alternately caressed by each; and Laura, for that moment, forgot the world contained a being dearer to her than this beloved brother.

A thousand questions were asked on either side, and it was with no small degree of pleasure madame Hoffman learnt that, in consequence of the interest his uncle had used, he was allowed sufficient leave of absence to attend them into Languedoc, and thither they were to proceed immediately.—"I have," he continued, "a letter for you, in which is explained the mo-

tive for this arrangement, made in consequence of a temporary confinement my uncle is at present enduring from a severe attack of the gout, an enemy by which I find he is much annoyed. You may be sure I readily availed myself of the permission his application had procured for me, and instantly set out myself, instead of dispatching the letters I had previously written, to say I had but little prospect of seeing you before the commencement of your journey, as I was in hourly expectation of being removed to another station; but shall now enjoy a two-fold pleasure—that of conducting you to the protection provided for you by my lamented father, and the high gratification of beholding that friend whom, in his preparation for what so fatally followed, he besought me to bless through life; and if monsieur De Valmont,” he added, “knew how dear—how deservedly beloved this mother and sister are, he would not hesitate to believe I have implicitly obeyed the solemn injunction. Still I have to regret our meet-

ing must be so transient, since it is expedient we should leave Breslaw as soon as my mother can be prepared for the removal, as the chevalier Hoffman, aware of the confusion which prevails in this quarter of the world, will become apprehensive for their safety, independent of which, he expresses the most anxious solicitude for an early opportunity of proving his readiness to accept the trust committed to him, and, from his affectionate letter to myself, I dare believe we shall find him all that he has promised to be."

This assurance of her son's removed a heavy weight from the mind of madame Hoffman, and she replied, that, having held herself in readiness for a removal that she knew must sooner or later take place, she could accompany him whenever he found himself sufficiently recovered from the fatigue of the journey he had already taken to begin another.

Laura's countenance during this conversation had undergone many changes; *it was alternately the flush of fraternal*

transport, as she beheld the elegant form of this loved and long-expected brother, and the paleness of expiring hope, as she looked on the no-less-interesting friend, from whom she was to part, too probably for ever; but Ethelwald's inquiry if she was indisposed, when he noticed these variations, recalled her resolution; and, hurt to believe, from the question, she had been less guarded than usual, felt it was requisite to have recourse to dissimulation, and she assured him, if her features had betrayed symptoms to excite such a supposition, he must attribute them solely to the effect of her present joy, which had nearly overpowered her.

The stratagem succeeded; Augustus kissed the pale lips which still trembled as they pronounced the falsehood, and Ethelwald, who would have risked worlds to promote rather than blast the happiness of such a woman, unsuspecting of the real cause, readily admitted the well-timed excuse.

*It was less successful on the part of ma-*

dame Hoffman; she traced its source, and was not thus easily deceived: but she felt the trial of her child was indeed severe, and while she regretted it should degrade a mind so noble by reducing it to the mean subterfuge of evasion, a tear from the fount of parental affection crased it from the tablet in which wounded memory would have placed the record.

It was then finally determined, as they had no farther motive for remaining at Breslaw, that they should leave it on the following day, a determination that, nevertheless, produced an evident gloom on the whole party, since the young men, mutually pleased with each other, would willingly have spent a longer period together, and all the obligations she owed Ethelwald rushed forcibly to the mind of madame Hoffman. The moment of parting was now near, and she felt, much as she had ever esteemed him, it was *then* only she was fully sensible of the extent of her regard for him.

*Ethelwald looked on their departure as*



a deprivation of many pleasing hours he should have spent in their society; his heart acknowledged the most lively interest in their welfare; and in regretting the little probability there was of their ever again meeting, almost wished to have been less acquainted with their worth. But in the bosom of the artless Laura a thorn was planted destructive to her future peace, and while, like the hidden treasure of the Spartan boy, it consumed each vital, an interesting smile played on her lovely features that indicated a serenity she did not feel.

Ethelwald, desirous of protracting the final adieu, proposed accompanying them some few miles on the road, an offer gladly embraced by his friend; and as madame Hoffman was unprepared for the accommodation of her son, it was settled they should pass the night together, for which purpose, at a late hour of the evening, he returned with him to his quarters.

In passing the different sentinels on guard, the usual interrogation of "who

comes here?" was repeated, and answered on their parts; but Ethelwald's surprise was excited, by the silence of the man stationed nearest to his own apartment, and more so when, on examining the box, he found only the accoutrements belonging to the soldier (who had evidently deserted his post), and in one corner his cap and part of his regimentals. Almost involuntarily he searched the pockets, from which he drew a scrap of paper, but the darkness of the night prevented his ascertaining whether it was blank or written on. Prepared to have warned him of his danger, but to have pardoned him, had he found the man sleeping, Ethelwald was now equally determined, if possible, to discover his retreat, and bring him to the punishment his perfidy demanded.

For this purpose he gave the alarm, by making it known to the next sentinel, and having procured a light, he examined the paper, on which was written—"It must be to-night—all is ready; the watch-word will be Forest—you know the rest."

The characters were familiar to him, and a moment convinced him they had been traced by Sebastian. A variety of conjectures now assailed him; but he first inquired if he had duly passed the nightly signals? and was told by the sentinel he addressed, some one had done so, but at the moment, it struck him as differing from the voice of Hubert, yet again thinking it might be fancy only, he had thought no more of it; and it then wanted some minutes of the hour which must have discovered his desertion, by the alarm his silence would have given.

Ethelwald then returned to the garrison, and dispatched a guard round the environs, while himself sought Sebastian to demand an elucidation of the paper he hesitated not to believe must have been written by him; but Sebastian was not to be found, and the more he ruminated on the dark mystery that seemed hovering, the more he accused himself for having suffered a moment to elapse without *demanding* an explanation of the words.

which have more than once occurred, and which he had determined should take place before he retired for the night, even though accompanied by Augustus Hoffman.

That Sebastian was the companion of Hubert's flight could no longer be doubted: whence the motive of their desertion, he was at a loss to discover; but it still less occurred that his servant, in leaving him thus clandestinely, should have robbed him also; and when, on his friend suggesting the probability of such an idea, he examined his desk, every faculty was absorbed in the mutual sensations of disappointment and indignation.

He possessed few valuables; but the unjust Sebastian had deprived him of a relic nothing could restore. A few guineas which he had deposited in a drawer were a trivial loss, when compared with the packet he had received but the night before, and which he now vainly sought to discover. The money, he conjectured, might be of consequence to his faithless

servant, and he could have pardoned the theft; but what motive had instigated him to take papers from which no advantage could be obtained, was a question he could not solve—perhaps it was a mean revenge for his having kept him up during the perusal of them—"If so," he mournfully added, "Sebastian, thou art indeed revenged!"

Recollection of the chevalier's letter presented itself, and his imagination became tortured, till he remembered its purport must be ambiguous to all but himself, and he endeavoured to believe, that if Sebastian's curiosity induced him to peruse them, having done so, he would destroy them, satisfied with merely depriving him of what he might judge had afforded him a degree of happiness.

He then explained the extent of his loss to Hoffman, and the rest of the night was passed in consulting what measures to adopt. It was probable Hubert, as a deserter, might more easily be taken than Sebastian, over whom the military could

have no influence, and he despaired of punishing his ingratitude by the extent of the civil power.

In this instance his suggestions were too justly founded, for the morning had scarcely dawned, when Hubert was brought in a prisoner by a guard dispatched for him, and who reported they had met a powerful resistance from himself and three men with whom he was in company; that one, who proved to be his father, appeared to be much distressed when he was taken, and wished to have followed him; but as they had no business with any one but Hubert, they paid little attention to him, or the other two, who made their escape the instant they saw their comrade in danger of being taken.

Ethelwald on this intelligence hastened to the guard-room, but in vain interrogated the prisoner as to his flight or his companions. He persisted in maintaining an obstinate silence to every inquiry, save that relative to Sebastian, of whom he de-

nied any knowledge, though Ethelwald discredited the assertion.

As this unpleasant incident would of course prevent the latter from accompanying his friends as proposed, and as Augustus Hoffman, from being with him at the period of his discovering the deserted sentry-box, might be called on for his evidence, it was determined to postpone their journey till after the expected court-martial had taken place, and he retired to relate what had passed to madame Hoffman, while Ethelwald sought his commandant for the same purpose.

A few hours only intervened before the court met, and the prisoner was brought forward. As there were but few who could not read his fate, an awful silence prevailed while the charge against him was read, at the conclusion of which, a man, who was reported to be his father, and who had accompanied him in, inquired if he might be permitted to speak?

On being answered in the affirmative,

and asked if he had aught to say in the prisoner's behalf? he replied, in a voice apparently struggling between sullen resentment and affection for his child—"I would see his accuser."

Ethelwald, supported by a consciousness of having only performed his duty in bringing Hubert to justice, undauntedly stepped forward.

A ghastly paleness at that moment pervaded the features of the man, rendered more visible by its contrast with a pair of large black brows that shaded eyes of dark malignity; his lips quivered, and his whole frame appeared convulsed, as he said—"Thou hast done well: go and enjoy, if thou canst, the remembrance of this praise-worthy deed, but take with thee a father's curse, sealed by a brother's blood, for I know thy evidence can sentence him to death—But I will not survive him!—Now then, fratricide, proceed with thy vengeance!"

Ethelwald believing affection for his son, and terror for the danger to which he



saw him exposed, had dethroned his reason, gazed on him with commiseration, and while astonishment seemed to suspend the faculties of all present, he would have spoken to him, but no sooner made the attempt than he exclaimed—"What canst thou say to appease a wretched father?—Behold thy brother's bonds, and ask who knit them. I know what thou wouldst say—that thou disownest the tie; but nature pleads too powerfully, and, raised as thou art above me, I will proclaim myself thy father!"

He might have proceeded, for no one possessed power to interrupt him; every eye was fixed on Ethelwald, as if inquiring what they were next to expect. But not a voice broke on the solemn silence, for, himself motionless, every limb stiffened by horror, and every sense deadened by sounds which still vibrated on his ear, he stood a moment as it were transfixed by the curse he had heard pronounced. A thousand confused ideas passed in rapid succession, but his strength of mind at

length enabled him to overcome in part the shock his spirits had received, and with a degree of firmness he said—  
“What am I to infer from these insinuations?—and by what authority dost thou assert ties of which I am ignorant?”

“Why then tremble?” said the man.

This was an inquiry his brother-officers would also have made, for his visible agitation could not pass unnoticed, and a satirical smile half rose on the countenance of some whose illiberal minds, stung by his superior merit, felt a satisfaction in seeing him, as they believed, thus humiliated.

“Because,” replied Ethelwald, “I was unprepared for such intelligence.”

“Say, rather,” he returned, “that knowing thyself an impostor, thou feltst my charge was just, and trembled to acknowledge so poor a creature was thy father. He that passes for such, and calls himself De Valmont, is an impostor also—I know him.”

A veteran officer, who had been present

during the scene, now stepped forward to Ethelwald, and said—"There is a strange mystery in all this; but as it is totally unconnected with the business on which we have met, and this by no means a place to discuss a point so delicate, you had better adjourn, and see this man in private: it is possible the misunderstandings which evidently exist may then be properly explained; at any rate, there is no one here whom it can concern, and I see no occasion for its being thus public."

Ethelwald thanked him for his humane interference, but said, as he came there in obedience to his duty, and that duty called on him for a performance of its dictates, he wished the court to proceed. He was unconscious that nature had ever blessed him with the endearing ties of fraternal affection, for he had never been taught to cherish or feel the sacred impulse; but if he had a brother who could so daringly violate his duty as a soldier, he was equally justified in bringing that brother to the punishment he knew awaited him for

such an offence—that of the man who averred himself to be his father he knew nothing, but he was now prepared to hear an elucidation of the mysterious language he used, and it therefore argued little who was witness to the tale he had to relate:—

“For myself,” he continued, “general D’Earlach, I hesitate not to acknowledge I am left to seek, in the world’s wide expanse, the unnatural parents who forsook my helpless infancy. True, reared and educated by the best of human beings, I never knew their loss; I revered his virtues, loved him with filial affection, and even when he tore aside the veil which deceived me as to my claims on him, and owned I was the child of doubt, thrown on his humanity, my heart, devoted to him by every tie of love and gratitude, refused to acknowledge another father: but the happiness of that beloved friend is interested in the discovery he wished to make. If, then,” he added, addressing himself to the man, who still kept

his eyes fixed on him with a malicious smile, "your assertion is just, if I am the child you deserted, and now claim, tell me who and what you are, for his sake: for myself, 'tis of little consequence; the sun of my ambition will but set a few years sooner, and I shall resign my commission with honour, since I have hitherto preserved it unsullied."

Almost exhausted by the exertion his spirits had undergone, he sat down, and general D'Earlach, turning to the man, said—" 'Tis possible, my friend, you may be deceived. What reason have you to suppose that this gentleman is your son?— I must own it appears highly improbable. Do you know the chevalier De Valmont, whose name he bears?"

"Nor does he," replied the man; "but I know the count De Vennuiel under that mask."

"My God! he is dead!" exclaimed Augustus Hoffman, who, with another officer, was endeavouring to raise Ethelwald from the floor, on which he had fallen.

A general consternation now prevailed; and, in the most distracted state, his friend hung over him, while he blamed the tardiness of those sent for assistance; for as he lay, pale and lifeless, not a pulse told he even existed.

General D'Earlach ordered the prisoner to be taken back, and his father detained, till further inquiry could be made, on the recovery of Ethelwald, who had not shewn the faintest symptoms of returning life, and was, on the surgeon's arrival, instantly conveyed to his bed, where he lay some hours, in a stupor that threatened an alarming result.

Augustus Hoffman, with unremitting attention, watched by him, and hailed a dawn of reason with almost frantic joy.

To Ethelwald the past event was an imperfect dream he could not comprehend; but when recollection enabled him to compare all that had passed with his own suggestions, and the chevalier's letter, his heart recoiled from the conviction that he had

indeed found a father, an alliance with whom must eventually blast every future prospect of his life. It next occurred, the former surmise he had so often cherished, and as often endeavoured vainly to reject, namely, that the count De Vennuiel and his beloved De Valmont were the same beings, was now verified; but that a man whom he had never before seen, and of whom he had never heard, should be thus perfectly acquainted with himself and connexions, was still mysterious. If he was his child, and he shuddered at the supposition, it was not possible he could have traced him from the likeness which his infant countenance had impressed on his mind; and it was still less probable he had followed him through life, without making those claims he now asserted with such determined confidence. His mind reverted to the letters he had lost, and which might, though he knew not how, as Hubert denied a knowledge of Sebastian, have fallen into his hands: but they spoke not of the count De Vennuiel.

Perplexed by a variety of ideas, he confided the purport of them to the friendly Augustus, and by his advice the father of Hubert was sent for, but refused to obey the summons.

"Tell him," he said, to the bearer of his message, "I leave not the prison of Hubert, till we are freed together."

Incapable of rising to go to him, Ethelwald endured all the tortures of suspense, till Hoffman offered to see him, and, if possible, obtain some more satisfactory information; but it was a vain attempt.

To the interrogations of this friend he replied—"Let him release the brother he has condemned, and I will tell him who and what I am; till then, he cannot deny my charge, nor will I withdraw it: let him seek a farther confirmation, if he still doubts my word, from De Vennuiel; he best can tell him by what means he became dependent on his bounty."

An anxious wish to penetrate the mystery, aided by a strong constitution, enabled Ethelwald, on the following day, to



leave his quarters : but he also vainly entreated a minute detail of circumstances so essential to his welfare ; yet the dark hints he gathered were sufficient to convince him much more was known of the chevalier De Valmont to this stranger than all his own observations had ever enabled him to discover, during a residence of many years with him ; and he returned to his own room, restless and unsatisfied.

On his arrival, he was surprised to see general Daun, who, taking his hand in the most friendly manner, said—" I have been made acquainted, my young friend, with the particulars of a circumstance that, I must own, appears very strange, and have called on you, to gain some farther and more correct information of the business ; and though I am still inclined to believe, from the report of general D'Earlach, there must be some mistake on the part of this man, yet I regret the claim he asserts should have been made thus public, because I feel for your situation, and so well know the tenor of military minds, that

even the faintest shade reflected on the origin of a brother-officer fails not to prove a theme of exultation in illiberal minds, while even those who rise superior to mean prejudice wish it had been otherwise. Without a desire, De Valmont, of wounding your feelings, permit me to ask, from a friendly motive, for I am not induced to do so by curiosity, if you have the slightest reason to believe your connexions are at all known to this man, or can even surmise what has instigated him to assert pretensions I should hope are unfounded?"

"This recent proof of general Daun's goodness," replied Ethelwald, "adds to the obligations I already owe him, for the flattering interest he has taken in my welfare on all occasions; and a knowledge of his exalted and generous sentiments inspires me with confidence to impart to him the little I know of myself, trusting, that when I have done so, and acquainted him with my fixed determination on the result of this fatal business, he will at least commiserate the unhappy being, who,

with the fairest prospects of honour and glory before him, the esteem and notice he was so ambitious of obtaining, and the applause of characters he revered, must renounce them all, tear asunder the bonds which endeared existence, become the mark of an unfeeling world, and a wretched exile in it, for errors not his own."

General Daun, evidently affected, assured him not only his commiseration, but the esteem he had long cherished for him, and which his exemplary conduct had justly merited, must ever follow him through life; but added—"A great deal must yet be explained on both sides, before I can bring myself to believe you have sufficient grounds for the distress of mind in which I am sorry to have found you."

Ethelwald then enumerated every transaction of his past years; the conversation he had had with the chevalier De Valmont, and such parts of his letter as related to himself. He explained also the manner in which he had lost that letter,

together with those of Albert, general Durand, and monsieur St. Aubin, with his own conjectures that it was in part from them the present knowledge of himself had been obtained, as he had still strong suspicions of an existing connexion between Hubert and Sebastian, in confirmation of which he mentioned the mysterious letter he had found on the battery at Schweidnitz, which certainly concerned himself—the paper he had taken from Hubert's pocket, which he believed to be Sebastian's writing, and the singular circumstance of their leaving Breslaw at the same time.—“ Having thus, general Daun,” he added, “ convinced you I am the child of doubt, it remains only for this man to prove I am his son.—Great God!” he continued, “ if it be so, why didst thou implant in my nature sentiments that would urge me to believe it impossible, since that nature shrinks appalled from the duty I shall owe him as a father? Yet I cannot discredit his assertion, even from

the imperfect hints he has already given me. I have, indeed, sometimes imagined extreme poverty might have induced my wretched parents to force me on the bounty of the chevalier De Valmont, and that terror of the consequence of their detection prevented their ever having acknowledged me; but that in a strange country I should discover relations on whom I cannot look but with horror, is a trial for which I am not prepared: the consequence, however, is inevitable. I shall write immediately to general Durand, and having explained the cruel motive that obliges me to renounce his interest, resign the commission his friendship procured for me, and which I can no longer retain with honour. I have then but one sacrifice more to make, which is the resignation of a name hitherto so dear to me: the future is a blank to which I must not look, nor dare I cherish a remembrance of the past, for that would unman me."

General Daun interrupted him by saying—"A plan has just struck me, which

I shall certainly adopt, as promising much success in the elucidation of this business, though I am sorry, De Valmont, to add, there is a wide field for the pretensions of De Roseville, for that I find is the name he bears. It is probable he is induced to make them from pecuniary motives; but his evident knowledge of the chevalier De Valmont, or, as he asserts, the count De Vennuiel, staggers me. I will, however, question him myself, after which it will be expedient for you to write instantly to the chevalier, and entreat such particulars as relate to the period and manner of your becoming known to him. In the mean time, the better to secure this father of Hubert's, till we obtain an answer to those inquiries, the impending court-martial shall be deferred; in the interval, some light may be thrown on the affair, which is at present dark and intricate:" and having again assured him of the continuance of his disinterested friendship, he left him to seek De Roseville, whom as yet he had *not seen*.

As there no longer remained a possibility of Ethelwald's leaving Breslaw to accompany madame Hoffman part of her journey, and still less that she could wait the termination of a business in which she felt so deeply interested, it was now settled they should no longer protract a stay which might give offence to the brother who so anxiously expected their arrival in Languedoc, and he promised Augustus to collect his mind sufficiently to see her that evening, for the purpose of taking a final leave. In the mean time, he employed himself in writing to general Durand, in which letter, with the most lively expressions of gratitude, for repeated instances of his friendship, he explained the necessity for his instantly resigning the commission he then held, since it was probable a few hours would prove his birth too ignoble for the distinction it gave him; but he left his letter unfinished, with an intention of adding to it, when the dreaded confirmation enabled him to do so, and began a second to Albert. But this task

was more severe than the first—the sacrifice he had to make more painful; to close for ever the fond connexion that bound him to the brother of Katherine, to bid them both an eternal adieu, was madness: yet no alternative remained, for he knew not the name he was to assume in future, or the road destiny had marked for his pursuit; that they both were such as must preclude him from all intercourse with them, he did not hesitate to believe.—“ I will, therefore,” he said, in addressing Albert, “ before I renounce for ever that by which you admitted me to the friendship I so proudly boasted, entreat you, by that friendship, to tell that beloved sister, whom, unconscious of my base origin, once dared aspire to, that while this wretched heart beats responsive to the misery that overwhelms it, her image will be its dearest inmate—time can never eradicate a remembrance of monsieur and madame St. Aubin’s worth; and for yourself, Albert, friend of my youth, while my blessings follow you through future years.



may I trust you will pray for the lost Ethelwald De Valmont, and, in so doing, forget that he is an impostor, or at least acknowledge he was an innocent one."

He had scarcely finished his letter when he received a note from general Daun, saying the man had pleaded indisposition as a motive for not accompanying the messenger he had sent, but had promised to attend him on the following day.—"It may be as well," he added, "not to appear over anxious for what we must still pretend to discredit, be the result what it may; for myself, I am inclined to draw favourable conclusions from his reluctance to come to an explanation; however, to-morrow I shall certainly use some other methods, if he still evades it; but, in the mean time, I would have you acquaint the chevalier with all that has passed, to prove how essential his answer will be, and which he will certainly not delay."

Ethelwald having made a suitable return to the note, accompanied Augustus, who had spent the greater part of the day

with him, to madame Hoffman, whom he had not seen since the incident, which was now become the common topic of conversation. Her expressive features plainly indicated how much she was interested for him, and she pressed him to her maternal heart with an affectionate solicitude that overpowered him.

“A less kind reception, my amiable friend,” he said, “had better suited the wretched Ethelwald, who will soon have no ties but those who have rudely torn him from all he loved.”

“But they cannot,” she replied, “tear you from our remembrance—they cannot erase the virtues that have endeared you to us, or bid us forget what you were, and what, but for their machinations, you would have been. Believe me, De Valmont, it is an imposition; some dark deed is working, of which this man is the agent, for you are not—cannot be the child of such a being as he is described to me.”

Ethelwald smiled at her energy, but every resolution he had once made to look

only on the fairest prospect vanished before the trial he had to sustain, and he felt convinced there must be sufficient proofs of his consanguinity to this man, or he had not dared to assert it.

Laura, who had been absent on his first arrival, now entered the room, and Ethelwald's own wretchedness could not render him, for one moment, unmindful of her pale and languid look.

Believing it arose in part from the kind interest she took, as a sincere friend, in his welfare, he attempted to express his regret that she should have suffered his unhappy destiny to have affected her so much: but when she raised her beautiful eyes suffused in tears, and said—"De Valmont, we met in sorrow, and are doomed to part in such!"—his fortitude forsook him, and pressing her hand, he replied, in a faltering voice—"I should have less regretted this stroke of fate, had my kind friends been spared a knowledge of it till their commiseration had been unavailing, for a very *short time* will serve to remove me far

from the trace of those who once knew me: but," he added, faintly smiling, "we must not, mademoiselle Laura, devote the last few hours we spend together to melancholy reflection."

Madame Hoffman, to change the subject, started several others, but the prevailing one insensibly returned, for they were too much interested to wholly dismiss it; and when the hour reminded him of withdrawing, he clasped them with silent agony, then pressed them to his burning lips, and rushed from the house without waiting for Augustus, who had determined again to pass the night with him.

Terrified by his manner, madame Hoffman entreated he would follow him immediately, while she administered that consolation Laura so much needed.

Having overtaken him at a small distance, they were proceeding together, while Ethelwald apologized for the abruptness with which he had left him, and begged his state of mind might plead the excuse; but before his friend could an-

swer him, they were passed by a man, who having looked steadfastly at the former, presented him a note, and, without waiting a moment, walked from them with a rapidity that precluded their even discovering the road he had taken.

Ethelwald still continued looking on the folded paper he had received, till Augustus said—"This is, I suppose, some new mystery; at least, let us hasten to know its purport, for here we cannot tell for which it may be intended, though it is most probable for you, by the mode of delivery, and perhaps contains the desired information."

The suggestion hurried him on, and he had scarcely reached his quarters, before he tore it open, and read—

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"I have been sent for to answer questions no one has a right to ask me but yourself, and have refused to go; neither will I be compelled to speak, but 'tis right you should know how much I have to

impart, and in which not only yourself, but the chevalier De Valmont, are deeply concerned; and to hear that, you must hasten to me, for I am ill, and know not how long I may be able to tell you who I am. I have been removed from Hubert's cell to a small cabin, where you may be led by the man who brings this, and who will wait at some distance from your quarters: but I will have no witnesses of what I have to tell you; choose, therefore, if you will hear what you have little reason to expect: but be careful how you refuse to see me, when I swear I have power to drag your favourite De Valmont to a public trial, which would condemn him; and on your conduct depends his fate, as well as that of your

“FATHER.”

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Ethelwald striking his clenched hands against his forehead, exclaimed—“What more is reserved for me!—Oh, Hoffman,” he continued, “my cruel destiny forbids

even the comfort of your consoling friendship, for I dare not acquaint you with the contents of this, because it relates to those dearer than my existence, which is now indeed become hateful. This new-found father is ill, and I must hasten to him ere it is too late."

"Not without me," said his friend, impatiently, "for such a messenger as this bodes no fair dealing. Why did he not send for you in the day?"

"I know not," he replied, "how long this man may have been waiting for me; but I dare not hesitate to go."

"And who is to accompany you?"

"I have a proper direction," said Ethelwald, anxious to escape the importunities of Augustus, who in vain entreated to be his companion, still persisting in a belief that some evil was intended him; but Ethelwald's impatience to penetrate the mystery overcame every other consideration, and he could listen to no reasoning that clashed with the promised information, and having assured his friend the

tenor of his letter precluded all apprehension of danger, and that he should return in a short time, prevailed on him to go to bed, believing that when they again met, his mind would at least be relieved from the horrors of that suspense he then endured.

Augustus reluctantly consented to remain during his absence, but finding him resolute, was obliged to submit, and Ethelwald hastened out in search of his mysterious guide.

Hoffman threw himself on the bed, but for some time sought in vain for the repose anxiety had banished from his pillow; and the hours passed heavily on, till at length wearied nature suspended his painful reflections in a restless sleep, from which he at length started in agony, and eagerly demanded what was become of his friend? There was no one present to answer him, and he beheld, with a degree of wretchedness, the full light of day, which had not restored Ethelwald.

An imperfect impression of a dream still



dwelt on his mind : he had been wandering on a barren heath in search of his sister, who had left him a few hours before that in which they were to have removed from Breslaw, and, in imagination, he had sought in vain to trace her, when, by one of those sudden transitions incident to dreams, he was sleeping in the ruins of an old castle, though he knew not where situated, or how he came there, when a voice he knew to be De Valmont's exclaimed loudly—"Farewell, Augustus!—the fates have decreed thy friend a life of infamy, and we meet no more."

At the same moment, on looking up, he beheld several men wrapped in horsemen's coats, and among them the form of Ethelwald, though evidently disguised, hastening through an arch of the building.

He arose to follow them, and in so doing stumbled over something which impeded his way, and, on stooping down to examine it, discovered the lifeless corpse of Laura.

Terror overpowered every faculty, and

he awoke, in the most agitated state, to a confirmation of all his fears that a dreadful fate awaited his friend, whom he instantly set out in search of. His first steps were bent towards the guard-room, where he endeavoured to persuade himself he might have stopped on his return; but a kind of whisper appeared to pass round on his entrance, which he was at a loss to understand, till, on asking a young officer present if he had seen De Valmont?—he replied satirically—“Oh no; he has been too much engaged to favour us so highly.”

Astonished by an answer he was still more at a loss to comprehend, he stood a moment silent, while the young man continued—“The emancipation of his brother has probably detained him longer than he expected, or it may be that he has accompanied him part of his road.”

More than ever surprised, Hoffman replied—“You have certainly, sir, mistaken my inquiry, which was for monsieur De

Valmont, who I never understood had a brother."

"Oh yes," returned the loquacious subaltern, who a few days before would have felt his consequence raised by even a bow from Ethelwald (such was the esteem his conduct had ever merited and procured), "he has lately discovered one in the exalted character of a deserter, and by way of removing this foil to his own greatness, he has contrived to effect his escape, though, by your inquiry, I should judge he has forgot to come back himself."

"I trust not," said Augustus, with indignation; "for in that case the correction of his base calumniator must descend to me, a circumstance he would regret, though I should glory in chastising the mean cowardice which could take advantage of those whom absence rendered incapable of defending themselves."

"How do you like that, Le Jefferson?" said a youth, who had heard the conversation: "were you prepared for such a smart retort?"

“Whether I was or not,” returned the other, evidently confused, “I suppose this gentleman will expect to find me so when he calls on me, though what I advanced was merely in jest, from the singularity of the business, and the strange escape of the prisoner, for I bear no animosity to monsieur De Valmont.”

“Pitiful miscreant!” exclaimed Hoffman, “when I am satisfied as to the safety of my friend, I will return, and know to whom he is indebted for such liberality, and, till then, this will give you the name of his friend;” in saying which, he threw down his card, and left the room, to make farther inquiries that only added to his tortures.

Hubert had indeed made his escape, for his cell was found vacant, and the sentinel in a state of intoxication, from which, at that period, there was little prospect of his recovering. It was even rumoured that something had been infused in the liquor he had drank, to cause such uncommon

stupefaction as that in which he lay : but of Ethelwald no intelligence could be gained, and he waited on general Daun, with a resolution of explaining the transactions of the past night, asserting his own surmises that some plot which was not complete had been laid for the destruction of his friend.

The general's opinion coincided with his, and he ordered the most diligent search to be made after Hubert, believing the apprehending of him must lead to a restoration of De Valmont: but the day was spent without any information of the fugitives having been obtained.

Hoffman had scarcely reached his mother's house, who now, more than ever wretched for the fate of Ethelwald, determined to protract her stay till the last moment, when a letter was delivered him from Le Jefferson, couched in the most submissive terms, and asking his pardon for what had passed.

Augustus, despising the pusillanimity of the being who could so far disgrace the

character of a soldier, and too much interested in the destiny of his friend to attend to aught beside, paid little attention to the contents, while he anxiously counted every hour of the three succeeding days, that still brought no account.

A longer delay was every way inconvenient to madame Hoffman, and, in a state of mind equally wretched, the worthy family commenced their journey into Languedoc.

General Daun and every other officer who respected Ethelwald, incapable of passing an opinion on his singular departure, remained silent on the subject, and never failed to reprove those who made it a theme for raillery in their presence.

The general had taken the whole of his property into his own immediate charge, and felt convinced, from the manner in which every thing was left in his quarters, that he had no intention of leaving Breslaw on the night he parted with monsieur Hoffman.

The letters written to Albert and gene-

ral Durand he dispatched, with one from himself to the latter, stating a detail of the events which had succeeded the writing of Ethelwald's; and thus ended all trace of the generous and respected De Valmont, who, but a few days back, had been the praise of his superior officers, and the idol of his men.

END OF VOL. I.

